



2023 NATIONAL INVENTORS
HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Born: Nov. 9, 1959

Primary Connections:

- Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL), a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the University of Pittsburgh: Founder, Director and CEO, 1994-present
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Senior Research Career Scientist and Research Center Director, 2000-present
- University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences: Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research for Health Sciences and STEM Collaboration, 2021-present; Distinguished Professor and FISA Foundation/Paralyzed Veterans of America Professor, 1994-present
- Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the U.S. Army, 2014-present
- California State University, Sacramento: Assistant and Associate Professor of Electrical and Biomedical Engineering, 1989-94
- Pacific Gas and Electric Co.: Instrumentation and Control Engineer, 1985-86

Education:

- California Polytechnic State University: B.S., Electrical Engineering, 1985; M.Eng., Electrical Engineering, 1986
- University of California, Santa Barbara: Ph.D., Electrical and Computer Engineering, 1989

Military Service:

- U.S. Army, 1976-82

10 Things You Need to Know About

Rory Cooper

Wheelchair Technology

U.S. PATENT NOS. 6,276,705 & 8,264,458

1. Cooper was born in 1959 in Los Angeles.
2. He says his experience as an Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts helped him learn to problem solve, and his interest in tinkering was sparked by his family's automotive and repair shop.
3. In 1980, while he was serving with the U.S. Army in Germany, Cooper was hit by a vehicle while he rode his bicycle. He suffered a spinal cord injury and was paralyzed from the waist down.
4. When he became frustrated with his 80-pound wheelchair, he designed his own ultralight wheelchair in his family's shop.
5. In 1988, he won a Bronze Medal in the 4x400-meter relay at the Paralympic Games.
6. Cooper is a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors, IEEE, American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering, Biomedical Engineering Society and American Association for the Advancement of Science, and an overseas fellow in the Royal Society of Medicine.
7. He was the recipient of the Honored Alumnus Award at his alma mater, California Polytechnic State University.
8. Among Cooper's many honors are the Samuel E. Heyman Service to America Medal, the U.S. Department of Defense Meritorious Civilian Service Medal and the U.S. Army's Distinguished Civilian Service Award.
9. He is a member of the board of directors of the Research Foundation of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and a board member of Easterseals.
10. Cooper has more than 20 U.S. patents.