

Biographies



Carolynne Wilkinson Clair Co-Owner and Co-General Manager

Carolynne Wilkinson Clair, co-owner and general manager of Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort in Calistoga, California, shares the responsibility with her brother, Mark, who is in charge of the resort's hospitality.

Carolynne comes from a line of women a step ahead of their peers when it came to issues such as independence and business management. Her mother, Edy, ran their household like Carolynne runs the business - with astute attention to quality and detail, as she supported her husband, the late Dr. John Wilkinson, in making Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort world famous. Artistic, well read and self educated, Edy left formal schooling at the age of 12 to work along side her mother, Carolina Risso, who divorced her husband, Enrico, during a time when divorce was virtually unheard of. Grandmother Risso ran a restaurant to support her family and was widely known as one of the best Italian cooks in Northern California.

"I am the farmer's daughter," Carolynne often jokes, making light of the fact that she is a perfectionist and relentless cruncher of numbers. She makes certain that while Dr. Wilkinson's maintains her father's legacy of providing healthful and rejuvenating treatments to guests from around the world, it also remains a viable business in today's competitive environment.

Carolynne's grandparents, John and Julia Wilkinson, were the farmers. While growing crops in California's Central Valley, the Wilkinsons retained cultural elements from their European heritage. Their farmhouse was filled with music from the family piano and they vehemently encouraged education, supporting their son's passion for pursuing innovative methods of alternative holistic health care. His quest led to Calistoga, California, where he made mud baths famous.

While Carolynne describes her father as the ultimate gentleman, she admits that she has an affinity for the exuberant temperament she inherited from her mother's side of the family. "Father never swore, but mother's language and mannerisms could be spicy," she quips, with a laugh that echoes purely Italian pizzazz.



“When it comes to our family we can’t help but smile at the term ‘women’s lib,’” says Mark. “Carolynne can run an exceptionally tight ship and keep everything smooth with a joke and a good laugh. It’s in her genes.”

A University of San Francisco graduate and an integral part of the resort’s operations since 1974, Carolynne grew up with the family business. She worked alongside her father as he developed the innovative formulas and treatments that made Dr. Wilkinson’s, opened in 1952, one of the leading hot springs resorts in the world. Today Carolynne and Mark oversee the entire operation, from keeping the treatments true to their father’s pioneering philosophies, to maintaining the facility’s popular Wine Country guest accommodations.

Carolynne has been instrumental in overseeing several phases of resort improvements and expansions, including implementation of a new European facial treatment room, the restoration and conversion of the property’s Victorian home to guest rooms, and the addition of 17 Hideaway Cottages. The cottages are located just down the street from Dr. Wilkinson’s in a secluded park-like setting. She assisted with the design and installation of a new arrival lobby for guests checking in to Dr. Wilkinson’s and Victorian House guest accommodations. She and Mark are currently working on landscape design to further enhance the three swimming pools and garden patios that are integral to the mid-century resort.

A life time resident of Calistoga, Carolynne lives with husband, Howard, facilities manager at the resort, and their dog, Robert. Carolynne and Howard are the proud parents of two grown children, Bettina and Christopher. Carolynne enjoys traveling, antiquing, boating, and preparing gourmet meals. She inherited her mother’s love of fine arts and crafts. While her mother created colorful mosaics, some of which are integrated into the surfaces of the resort, she has a passion for textile arts and is a competent weaver. She participates in a Boy Scout Leadership Program and has volunteered as a tutor at the Calistoga Elementary School. In January 2008, Carolynne was co-recipient of the Calistoga Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year Award.

Mark Wilkinson Co-Owner and Co-General Manager



Born and raised in the Northern California town of Calistoga, where ancient volcanic activity left the region rich with hot mineral springs, volcanic ash, and mud resulting from the mixture of the two, Mark Wilkinson, co-owner and co-general manager of Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort, is definitely no stick-in-the-mud. Mark runs the hospitality side of the family business, known world wide for exceptionally therapeutic mud baths, while his sister, Carolynne is in charge of business practicalities, operations, and accounting.

The quintessential man about town, Mark is a dedicated gourmet who dines out nearly every evening, cajoling with winemakers, local personalities, and visitors who've been drawn to the mystique of healing mud in this year round playground where hot mineral water endlessly bubbles effervescently from below the earth. He is an accomplished classical pianist who often plays for friends after dinner, a noted collector of rare books and Napa Valley historical memorabilia, and an animal lover who shares his Calistoga home with his loving canine companions, Jack and Joe. Witty and artistic, Mark's childhood rendition of the Dr. Wilkinson's spa hangs in a permanent place of honor on the spa's reception area wall.

Most importantly, Mark is one of the leading authorities on the rejuvenating benefits of natural Hot Springs and spa treatments. He learned through hands-on experience, guided by his father, the famed Dr. John Wilkinson, a founder, pioneer, and innovator who taught the world about the healing properties of Calistoga mineral water and mud.

Mark's education in the family business began at about age 10. After graduating from Calistoga High School, he pursued an education at the University of California, Berkeley, then returning to Dr. Wilkinson's in 1977 to assume a full-time position working alongside his father.

Today, Mark and Carolynne oversee the operation of the resort, including strict adherence to the formulas and treatment philosophies so carefully researched and practiced by their father, who launched his career with the healing art of chiropractic.



While the resort has grown, adding guest rooms and modern amenities since it was founded in 1952, Mark firmly believes that Dr. Wilkinson's proprietary hot springs treatments are the core of the operation. "Our mud baths have been described as a floating experience where one's sense of time and tension quickly evaporate," explains Mark. "Our formula is lighter than some others. Rather than oozing into mud, our guests are slowly immersed into our supportive, nurturing mixture, which wraps them like a cloud and is not at all claustrophobic. This treatment is the primary reason our following reaches across continents and through generations."

The treatments bring spa-goers from around the world to Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort - an industry flagship awarded Business of the Year by the Calistoga Chamber of Commerce in 1995.

Mark travels the world for recreation and to keep abreast of spa treatments offered at top resorts. Favorites include the Ritz Carlton at Laguna Niguel, Hotel Hana-Maui, and Honua Spa in Hana, Hawaii.

"At Dr. Wilkinson's we feature comfortable rooms in our mid-century building, our restored Victorian House, and our nearby Hideaway Cottages. Our main attractions are our hot mineral swimming pools, spa, and world-class mud baths," Mark emphasizes. "We offer an affordable, relaxed environment. Guests who come here are not looking for a five star experience, but rather an authentic, affordable, comfortable small town experience with historic, time-honored traditions. Our guests feel comfortable walking from their rooms to the pools and spa in their bathing suits. They gather for cheese and wine in our landscaped courtyards. They walk to nearby gourmet shops, restaurants, galleries and bookstores, surrounded by picturesque, wooded mountaintops."

Dr. Wilkinson's enjoys a following of people from all walks of life. Supporter Dick Vermiel, NFL Super Bowl Champion Coach, NFL Coach of The Year, and general "super coach," was born in Calistoga and comes to Dr. Wilkinson's for a mud bath when ever he comes to town, according to Mark. "Dick is a avid advocate who believes in the healing properties of our mud baths. He has brought many of his colleagues and the people he has coached in for a mud bath over the years. We enjoy hosting him and other celebrities, as well as customers from Europe and all over the country. We love to meet young people who may be from just around the corner and who might be here to experience their first mud bath ever."