



Meet Marcus Dowd, owner of Idlwilde Inn...

1. Describe Your Business:

Built in 1892, the Idlwilde Inn is a beautiful 18-room Victorian mansion and a favorite Watkins Glen bed and breakfast. It is perfectly perched at the top of a hill to allow for expansive views but is only a short walk into the village. It sits on two and a half acres in a park-like setting with a great lawn, formal gardens and Finger Lake views. This charming house has a character given

by exquisite craftsmanship of an earlier era, with a meticulously detailed staircase, moldings, ornamental ceilings and nine decorative fireplaces. There are several sunrooms, a romantic cupola room and a huge breezy wrap-around porch, all overlooking the beauty of Seneca Lake.

2. Tell us your story:

Marcus grew up on the east coast in Madison, New Jersey. He and his wife, Elin, met at Drew University. "I swept her off her feet after asking her out thirty-five times before she said yes," Marcus said. "We spent a year finishing up school, then moved to California. I was chasing the Hollywood dream, and she had her own career." Elin's career took off, and she ended up working as President of Monrovia Growers for ten years. Marcus worked at a college in Claremont, CA. Marcus and Elin decided to move back to the east coast because their children and parents lived there. "We are doing exactly what we've always wanted... Even if we didn't realize that it is! We're too young to retire, so we had to figure out something we could do that would make people happy," Marcus explained. "How about a place where they pay you to make them happy while they're staying with you? It just seemed like the great later stages of life job, and we both love to cook. So, we came here last summer and met the previous owners. There was a tour group, and the previous owners showed us what to do." At night, the guests would stay out on the porch and drink wine. "The owners said we had to go out on the porch and make our presence known so things don't get out of hand," Marcus said. "So, the job is to go and talk to people at night and drink their wine? And all I have to do is make them breakfast in the morning? Sold!"

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

"I love talking to people," Marcus said. "Our first day that we had about sixteen people for breakfast, everyone comes in and sits at their own little table and whispers. I'm in there talking, and I had met everyone except one couple. I ask where they are from and she says State College, PA. I knew another guest, Judy, worked at Penn State, so I say 'Judy! Do you know Carol?' They didn't, but they started talking. The next thing you know, the whole room is talking to each other, and it is so loud you can't hear yourself talking anymore. I walked back into the kitchen, and I was almost weepy because it makes me so happy when I have people talking and getting to know each other."

4. What inspires you?

"That," Marcus said, referring to the previous story about connecting people.

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

"So far, it is getting used to having people in your house," Marcus said. "Did everyone go to bed? Should I get up and turn off the lights? Is everybody okay? And even that doesn't really keep me up, but it is hard to go to bed at night when there are still people awake. But I have to get used to that because we get up before them to cook breakfast, and you're tired by the end of the day. You can't stay up to midnight like everyone else."

6. What is your favorite local activity?

"We've always gone to the wineries, but my wife prefers beer to wine so she's happy to see all the new breweries popping up," Marcus said. "Having lived on the other lake, we always had a boat there. It was my father's boat, so for the first time this summer I brought it over from Cayuga to Seneca. I got the slip closest to our house in the harbor, so that if I'm walking down the hill and I slip, fall, and stumble into the lake when I come up at least I'm by my boat. So, boating and all the things that go with it."

7. Is there anything else we should know about you?

"Just that my wife is my better half," Marcus stated. "If you want to know more about me, get to know my wonderful wife. She's most of the operation."