

VANITY FAIR

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All You Need to Know About Wilfred Frost, CNBC's British Import

His nickname is Wilf, he's the son of David Frost (of *Frost/Nixon* fame), and he once played soccer against George H.W. Bush.

BY DAVID KAMP



Tall, convivial, and with angular good looks that recall both the young Peter Jennings and Sir George Martin circa *Rubber Soul*, Wilfred Frost has brought a dash of vintage-BBC flair to business-news TV since he joined CNBC's early-morning program *Worldwide Exchange*, in 2014. Which makes a kind of sense, as he is the middle son of the late Sir David Frost, the celebrated television interviewer and U.K. national treasure. In January, Frost the younger ("Most of my age group call me Wilf," he says) relocated from London to New York. His transatlantic expertise has positioned him well as one of America's foremost Brexit explicators, particularly on the revamped *Worldwide Exchange*, which he now presents with his co-anchor, Sara Eisen, from CNBC's headquarters just across the Hudson

in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. Herewith, some facts and insights gleaned from a lunchtime's worth of conversation with the 31-year-old newsman ascendant.

HE HAD three boyhood dreams of what he would be as an adult: “a TV presenter, like Dad; James Bond; or a soccer player.”

HE WENT straight into finance after graduating from Oxford.

IN 2011, three years into working at an asset-management company, investing in the Asian markets, he experienced a “Life’s too short” epiphany and furtively enrolled in a weekend-long media-training program in London, to see if he had what it took to follow in his father’s footsteps.

HE SWIFTLY discovered that, though many more hours of training would be necessary, he was a natural in front of the camera.

SHORTLY THEREAFTER, he gathered his immediate family and came out to them—as an aspiring television presenter.

HIS FATHER, far from wary, was “over the moon” at Wilfred’s new ambition. However, Sir David did not live to see his son professionally engaged as a newsman: in August 2013, he suffered a fatal heart attack aboard the *Queen Elizabeth*, where he had been booked to deliver a lecture.

WILFRED’S ANGUISH was compounded two years later by the sudden death of his older brother, Miles, who collapsed while out for a run, his death attributed to hypertrophic cardiomyopathy—an inheritable heart condition that Sir David was discovered, postmortem, also to have had.

WILFRED AND his younger brother, George, have been tested for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, and they do not have the condition. But they have co-founded the Miles Frost Fund, which is raising money to make such testing available to other families.

HE FINDS solace, vis-à-vis the double blow of unexpected family deaths, in a line that Queen Elizabeth II included in her message to the United States after the 9/11 attacks: “Grief is the price we pay for love.”

“**MOST OF MY AGE GROUP CALL ME WILF.**”

HE WEARS two black wristbands with gold clasps on them, which are sometimes visible on-air: Cartier Love Charity bracelets that his mother, Lady Carina Fitzalan-Howard, gave to each member of the family many years ago. Wilfred now wears both his and Miles’s. Lady Carina wears Sir David’s.

HE HAS met four U.K. prime ministers: Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, and David Cameron, with many of these encounters taking place at Michelmersh Court, the 21-acre estate that his parents used to own in the South of England. Sir David’s favorite pastime was to host prominent guests for Sunday lunch.

WILFRED ALSO met one president, George H. W. Bush, at Michelmersh Court. His two foremost memories of the Bush visit are (A) that the president was surprisingly game to get into some serious soccer playing with the Frost boys, and (B) “how many men with guns there were in our house and garden.”

HE IS on friendly terms with Michael Sheen, who played his father in both the stage and film versions of Peter Morgan’s *Frost/Nixon*.

HE ADMITS to having been initially put off by Sheen’s portrayal, finding it too broad and nasal, until he came to realize that Sheen was playing David Frost “pre-having kids.” He now says, “When I look back at clips of that period, I think it’s pretty spot-on.”

HE NOTES that the biggest difference between being a U.K. anchor and a U.S. anchor is that, in his home country, presenters are governmentally mandated to be impartial, whereas here “it is clearly quite the opposite.”

HE IS intent upon retaining his professional, U.K.-cultivated impartiality, though Joe Kernen, of *Squawk Box*, has tried, fruitlessly, to pry political opinions out of him.

HE IS single, which he deems “part of the fun of being in New York.”

HE STANDS six feet five and had already reached a height of six feet by age 12.

THAT SAID, he was also chubby. “The overriding factor when I was 8 to 12 was fatness, not height,” he says.

HE SLIMMED down and began to attain his current form when he joined the crew team at Eton.

HE AND all the Frosts are or were Arsenal supporters.

HIS FAVORITE Bond is Sean Connery, and his favorite Bond movie *Thunderball*.

HE LONG ago abandoned his boyhood dream of becoming Bond—“much to Mum’s dismay,” he says. “She still thinks it’s possible.”