

## Burr Leonard, Founder of The Bar Method

The Bar Method, founded by Burr Leonard in 2001 along with her former business partner, is an industry leader in the rapidly growing barre-based fitness niche. The company launched its Franchise operations in 2008 followed by its Media division in 2009. Today there are 73 locations across the country and in BC, Canada. The Media Company has produced 7 workout DVDs, apparel and exercise accessories. Bar Method franchisees, all certified instructors, are drawn to the quality of the workout and training and the infrastructure the business model provides. Bar Method clients are drawn to the outstanding workout, well-trained teachers and caring, supportive service.



Burr was born Ellen Burr Leonard in Atlanta, Georgia on May 16th, 1947. Her sister Mimi arrived a year and a half later. Burr's father George was an editor at Look Magazine and later wrote books about human potential. One of these books, "Mastery," became a foundational guide for The Bar Method®.

The family moved to Connecticut, San Francisco and then New York City. Burr developed into a shy tomboy who won friends as a teenager by teaching herself to play the guitar. She graduated from the University of California at Berkeley where she studied anthropology and journalism.

After college Burr spent a year studying acting at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco and then moved to New York City to pursue an acting career. It was during this time that she changed her first name to Burr.

Once in New York, Burr switched her focus to journalism. She covered young innovators and entrepreneurs as a reporter for Esquire and Forbes Magazines and later worked as a researcher for the TV show "Adam Smith's Money World."

During her years in New York, Burr became an avid student of the Lotte Berk Method, an exercise class she discovered in 1981. She married Carl Diehl, a lawyer, and shortly after their wedding in 1990, he treated her with a trip to London to meet exercise pioneer Lotte Berk.

As the two of them walked out of Lotte's little studio after the meeting, they hit on the idea of starting their own exercise business. They bought a license to operate Lotte Berk Method studios in Connecticut, and Burr spent a preparatory year studying and teaching The Lotte Berk Method at its New York studio.

Burr opened her first Lotte Berk Method studio in Greenwich, Connecticut in May 1992. Immediately, she noticed that some of her clients' knees, backs and shoulders were not

responding well to the exercises and sought the help of a physical therapist. Under his guidance she reworked the exercises so that they would target students' muscles without impacting their joints. Burr continued to improve on the technique as she and Carl opened three more Lotte Berk Method studios in New Canaan, Darien and Westport, Connecticut.

By the time their 10-year license term was up for renewal in 2000, Burr's version of exercise technique had become so different from the Lotte Berk Method's that the two companies agreed to part ways. Burr and Carl immediately founded The Bar Method and shortly afterwards sold their Connecticut studios. In 2001 they opened their first Bar Method exercise studio in the Marina district of San Francisco, California.

"I feel lucky that the fitness technique that has enhanced my life is something we are making more and more available to people." - Burr Leonard

Initially Burr and Carl didn't anticipate opening more studios. Their minds changed when their students began to approach them seeking studios of their own. In the early 2000s, Burr's sister Mimi opened a studio in Los Angeles, then two more in West Hollywood and Brentwood. Throughout the decade, Burr and Carl became franchisors of many more studios throughout the country and in Canada. Along the way Burr produced seven home exercise DVDs, and the company developed a line of exercise equipment & branded clothing.

In 2012, Carl retired from the Bar Method, and Mainsail Partners, a private equity firm, acquired a 40% interest in its operations.

Today Burr dedicates her time to ensuring consistency and quality in the exercise system, guiding her franchisees, and producing media products. She is currently working on a library of streaming Bar Method classes and a book on the Bar Method. She lives in Sausalito, California with her husband Michael Doud, COO of the Bar Method companies, and their Pomeranian Pi.