



## Interview with Deb Stockdale

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*Interviewee, Deb Stockdale*

I graduated high school in 2009, and have recently reflected on these formative years as I teeter in transition again as a university graduate. These reflections often surface as memories of Mrs. Stockdale (Deb), my Foods and Family

Studies teacher, who fostered my identity as an art-driven teenager with a passion for conversation.

Sharing many words that still resonate with me today, I decided to meet with Deb for coffee and listen to her own memories of transitioning to a life in Coquitlam as a teacher in SD43.

"For a Home Ec. teacher, I was never that domesticated myself," Deb laughs as she leads me into her kitchen. Surrounded by beautiful First Nations artwork, vintage wooden furniture and a cozy living room, I found myself in a house I never once believed I would have the fortune of seeing. Marvelling at the eclectic décor, I recall our many conversations when I was her student at Charles Best Secondary where she taught for eight-and-a-half years before retiring in 2014. I used to listen in admiration and envy as she talked about all the classic rock groups she'd seen over the years – conversations that inspired me to race home and explore albums on my own.

One day, I brought a binder to class plastered with a photo collage of my "rock star crushes", leading to Deb's excited declaration that, "[She'd] seen nearly half of the guys in my binder!"

Deb didn't always live in Coquitlam. She taught in Maple Ridge from 1981 to 1994, and Coquitlam was part of her daily journey – a shortcut to and from work. Deb commuted from Burnaby but comments, "I was getting burnt out from the commute every day, and I wanted the kids to be able to have a yard to play in and other families for them to make friends with – our complex was more adult-oriented, and I said to my husband Gary, 'You know your son is biking alone in the parking lot.' He admitted it was true, and so we looked in the Thermal Drive area of Coquitlam, settling on this home, a four-minute walk from Charles Best." Deb would go on to teach at Charles Best Secondary for eight-and-a-half years, retiring in 2014.

Enjoying life with Gary, who is also retired, Deb now spends her time gardening, going to concerts with her son Trevor, and travelling. Unable to fully depart from her life as a teacher, she continues to immerse herself with students at Charles Best as a chaperone on school trips and as a volunteer in a classroom once a week.

I take a moment to look around again, once more gazing at the china hutch, photographs and wooden walls surrounding me. Her home is a unique assortment of furniture pieces, family memories, and vinyl records collected gradually over the years, and it's this ongoing accumulation that best describes her 33 years of teaching. Over time, Deb has impacted the lives of thousands of students, with former students popping up out of the woodwork when she least expects it.

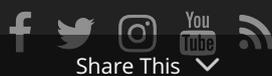
"I was in the Las Vegas airport of all places when I bumped into two of my students and their families. I couldn't help but make a joke about homework. At this point, I can't predict where I'll see former students – it doesn't seem to matter where I am, they pop up everywhere!"

As one of her former students, I look back on her animated and vibrant approach to teaching with fondness, smiling every time I remember how she demonstrated recipes to us in class as if she was a host on a cooking show. During one particular lesson, Deb introduced the "well method" of combining flour, eggs, and other ingredients to make dough. This method relies heavily on visual observation as one works the wet and dry ingredients together, but Deb performed the steps with ease while craning her neck to maintain eye contact with the class. Never breaking form, Deb truly rivalled Food Network hosts, creating both an educational and entertaining classroom for students.

Deb reflects, "I always said that if I was bored up there, that it must be even more boring for my students. As a teacher, you really have to jazz things up."

- *Tara Nykyforiak*

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