

Susan Davis:

Living in a Little Piece of Heaven

Born in Williams Lake, BC, Susan Davis spent her first 15 years in sawmill camps in the Interior of BC, 40 miles east of 100 Mile House; her father owned a sawmill.

A BC cartographer in charge of identifying lakes in that vicinity named six lakes in the immediate area for Susan and her five younger sisters; her two brothers are Roger and William, namesakes of Roger Lake and Williams Lake. Their first camp was on Crown land on Roger Lake, then they moved to Susan Lake.

Once there were enough children in the camp at Susan Lake, the school district opened a one-room school in the community of Eagle Creek, which had one store, one gas pump, and one church.

Susan's first jobs were in the sawmill—sweeping sawdust, piling lumber, and helping in the office. After she learned to drive, in the summer and on days off school, she hauled saws to Prince George to have them sharpened and to pick up parts and equipment.

When she was 15, her father's business took the family to Vanderhoof where they lived in a house with a paved street!

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she enjoyed working for him. When Susan later became a Notary in Sidney, Eric would drop in to say hello. "We had a grand time reminiscing about our short week together. What I learned in that week really stayed with me."

After graduating, Susan set out to seek her fortune; she worked in Whitehorse for a year for the Yukon Territorial government in personnel, then for an auto parts business doing delivery and pick-up, stocking shelves, and helping in the office.

She worked for Smith Cedar products in Victoria, then returned to Vanderhoof to work with the RCMP as an office clerk. That is where Susan met her first husband, an RCMP officer. She also worked for Vanderhoof lawyer Chris Wingham, where she got her first taste of conveyancing. Chris and his wife Helen were wonderful employers; they trained her very well, Susan says.

When she and her husband moved to Victoria, she worked for two law offices, one of them the firm of McKimm & Lott in Sidney. After her second child was born and she was looking to re-enter the workplace, local Notary John Salvador was looking for an assistant. Susan applied and got the job. She says, "John liked me; he kept me on until he retired."

Son Bryan was born in 1976, daughter Julie in 1979. When her husband was transferred with the RCMP, the family moved to Victoria.

In 1987, Susan's life took an unexpected turn. "I became a single parent. A couple of years later, some good friends decided I just *had* to meet a really special guy. I was not terribly interested in meeting their candidate because of his career choice—he was a policeman—but they convinced me his true calling was a carpenter." She agreed to one meeting.





Susan and Dan with Bryan and Danielle atop the Harbour Bridge in Sydney, Australia. The trip was a Christmas gift from the kids.

“Dan and I hit it off right away and married exactly one year after we met; we are still friends with the couple that introduced us!”

Susan has had a few mentors. “Sidney Notary John Salvador taught me so much about how to make a business successful.” His one piece of advice was for Susan to always treat people as she wished to be treated.

Another mentor was her Uncle Mike;

everyone who knew Mike called him Uncle. He taught her bookkeeping and business management skills. And her dad showed her that if you work hard and are honest, your life will be successful.

When John Salvador decided to retire, he told Susan she had to become a Notary if she wanted to continue to do the work she had been enjoying. He also thought she would make a great partner with his daughter Laurie.

Susan had not met Laurie but she trusted John. His instincts were right. Susan made a deal with John Bruce, the other Notary in Sidney, to purchase his Seal. She and Laurie studied the notarial course together, became Notaries together, and practised together for almost 20 years. “We always say our partnership has lasted longer than most marriages. We were just lucky that our personalities and different skill sets fit so well.”



Susan and Dan

The year she became a BC Notary, Susan was the first recipient of the Dr. Hoeter Award for receiving top marks in the notarial course—which she says was a complete surprise and a great honour.

Asked why she selected Sidney as home base, Susan notes that everyone who’s visited Sidney knows the place is a little piece of heaven. Why would anyone live or work anywhere else, if they had a choice?

She has sold her Sidney Seal and her share in the partnership to Lisa Ehrlich.



Peaceful refuge and outside living room in Summer

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Sidney-by-the-Sea and North Saanich make up the North Saanich Peninsula. Near Victoria on Vancouver Island, they are minutes from the Victoria International Airport and BC Ferries.

Aerial View of Sidney-by-the-Sea

Set amid the natural beauty and unspoiled charm of the Saanich Peninsula, the vibrant community of Sidney-by-the-Sea is the gateway to the BC Gulf Islands and the US San Juan Islands. This bustling commercial hub of the Saanich Peninsula is blessed with majestic views of the ocean and the Olympic and Cascade Mountain ranges. Sidney is a tourist's dream . . . a friendly port with modern marinas and a multitude of unique galleries, gift stores, antique shops, restaurants, bakeries, and coffee bars. Sidney-by-the-Sea appeals to those who enjoy both seafaring excursions and land-based adventures. There are many inlets and nearby islands, 3 K of publicly accessible waterfront—including many beaches and great beachcombing—and several interesting attractions in and around this pretty little resort town. Sidney enjoys a moderate Mediterranean-type climate with year-round mild temperatures, low rainfall, and very little snow.

Historically, Sidney was a small farming community and the location of Vancouver Island's first flour mill. The heavily wooded forests of the region soon fostered sawmills and a thriving lumber industry.

The Saanich People have lived on the Saanich Peninsula for thousands of years prior to contact with Europeans. The Hudson's Bay Company obtained large tracts of forested lands from the Saanich People in 1852. James Douglas purchased much of the land in North Saanich in 1858; one year later William and Charles Reay became the first settlers on the northern portion of the Saanich Peninsula when they purchased land from the Hudson's Bay Company. Some of this land is now the town of Sidney, incorporated as a village on September 30, 1952.

Sidney takes its name from nearby Sidney Channel and Sidney Island, originally known as Sallas Island. Captain Richards of the survey ship *Plumper* renamed it Sidney Island in 1859, after Fredrick William Sidney (later Captain), also a member of the Royal Navy. The Saanich People knew the site as *Tseteenus*, meaning "sticking out."

Susan now holds a Saanich Seal, designated as a Roving Seal. "This allows me to cover for Notaries throughout the province who want to take vacations. Some sole practitioners are faced with closing their doors for the time they want to be away. I move in and take over during their absence." She still covers for the Sidney Notaries when they are away and is thus able to remain a part of that practice in a small way.

Susan says the most satisfying aspect of being a Notary in a little community like Sidney is getting to know so many terrific people and maintaining long-term relationships with them. "My daughter used to love to walk around town with me when she was small because, in her eyes, I was famous!"

Her children have grown and the friends they grew up with are now getting married, starting families, and buying houses. "It's just terrific being able to help them when they need a Notary," she says.

Out of interest in the subject of land and to develop a better understanding of the real estate world as a whole, Susan took the four-year UBC Urban Land Economics Diploma Program by distance learning. She completed the course in 2002, placing second overall and first in the assessment option of the program.

In addition to serving on The Society's Board of Directors and chairing the Education Committee, she is involved in community service. She is Director of World Services for the Sidney Rotary Club and its President-Elect for the 2004 – 2005 year.

Until late Spring 2004, Susan served on the Board of Directors for Peninsula Community Services, a non-profit organization providing services and programs for seniors, teenagers, families, young mothers, and babies in need on the Peninsula, the Gulf Islands, and parts of Saanich.



Susan and Dan have a great time fishing from this old canoe. Even Simon the dog enjoys it!

When her children were young, Susan was actively involved in whatever they were doing. She was a Beaver and Cub leader (her name was Rainbow) and provided support in the Piranhas Swim Club. Later, Susan was a parent supporter in the youth rowing program at Elk Lake and ran the concession for a few years.

She liked watching the rowing so much, she gave it a whirl herself. Susan joined the VCRC Masters club, learned to row and went on to compete at various levels. In Vancouver, Washington, her quad competed in the World Masters Championships, winning the third-place medal.

Susan's special interests have varied from year to year. Today she focuses on her two grandsons. Stepdaughter Alana blessed the grandparents with first grandson Cole in October 2003. Two weeks later, daughter Julie gave birth to Dakota. Susan says they are the two cutest and smartest little guys you would ever want to meet!

Dan is retired from the police department and is doing what he has always loved—carpentry, as well as teaching motorcycle riding. They adore getting away

on their Goldwing for short trips. “You can't appreciate the fresh air, the sounds, and smells when travelling inside a car.”

Dan and Susan are avid travellers. In the last few years, they have visited England, Mauritius, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain, the Caribbean, Hawaii, and cruised the Panama Canal.

“We plan to take another trip abroad next year, but haven't quite settled on our destination. I see more trips to Australia in our future because our son has settled down there with his Australian girlfriend,” Susan says.

At home, she and Dan like to keep their garden in shape and take long walks with the family dog. They are also great football fans. When Julie married a WSU football player, they had to learn all about the sport. In May, Josh signed with the



The little jocks

NFL's Pittsburgh Steelers. “We will soon be sporting their jerseys and hopefully getting to some of those games.”

When we asked Susan what was most important to her in life, she responded, “My family and friends. I deeply cherish my wonderful husband Dan and our three children and their partners. They are the centre of our universe—next to those grandsons. We are also blessed with wonderful, true friends and lots of sisters and brothers!” ▲



The garden from another angle