



RESIDENT OF THE MONTH

Stephanie Van Denburg

Stephanie Van Denburg was born in Seattle, Washington, on December 20, 1947, and has lived a life filled with cultural adventure, resilience, and service. Raised in a globally minded family, she has two brothers; one a veterinarian and the other a former executive; and two Chinese stepbrothers who became an architect and a neurologist.

Her father, Stanley Spector, was a Navy veteran and a scholar in East Asian history. Her mother, Juanita Miller Spector, a North Carolina native, earned degrees in math and music, joining the Navy to escape the racism of the South. Stephanie's early years were marked by international travel as the family moved from Seattle to England and then to Singapore, where she attended a Mandarin-only school with over 1,600 Chinese students. The education was demanding, and discipline was strict, but Stephanie immersed herself in the culture, learning to eat with chopsticks and making friends across ethnic lines. During their time in Singapore, political tensions forced the family to flee under threat.

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WHY WESTMINSTER?



Stephanie, her mother, and brother were smuggled onto an American freighter, while her father and older brother hid in the jungle before returning to the U.S. The family then moved to Missouri, later returning to Singapore, where more turbulence unfolded. Her father resumed an affair and brought along a young secretary who disappeared during their return voyage to America. Stephanie, then 12, became a witness in a sensational federal murder trial that drew international media attention.

After the family settled in New York and her parents divorced, Stephanie continued to excel academically, skipping grades and attending the Juilliard School's dance program while in high school. She later earned her degree in cultural anthropology with a minor in education from SUNY Stony Brook.

In 1968, Stephanie married Joe Van Denburg and went on to have three sons. She initially worked as a social worker with foster children before transitioning to education. Deeply involved in her children's schools, she eventually earned a master's degree in library sciences.

She worked as a librarian for the Middle Country School District, including a unique position teaching 37 kindergarten classes where she developed her own curriculum.

When Barack Obama was elected, she donated 37 Black baby dolls to classrooms to promote inclusivity, a gesture inspired by her own upbringing. After divorcing in 2001, Stephanie began traveling extensively, visiting China, Thailand, India, Russia, Egypt, and many countries across Euro. She retired in 2011 to care for her mother, who transitioned from independent living to a veterans' nursing home. Stephanie became a dedicated volunteer, organizing programs and assisting residents.

She later took up ballroom dancing and met Robert Bradley, a recent widower. Though he was not a dancer at the time, Bob started lessons and the two began dating shortly after. They've now been together for seven years and still feel like they're on a honeymoon.

Stephanie has five grandchildren and remains close to her family, with her eldest son living in Terre Haute. In 2025, she and Bob moved to Westminster Village, drawn to its amenities and vibrant community. Stephanie is actively involved in the library and community life committees, lobby decorating, and the poetry group. Bob enjoys fitness, games, and music events. Together, they've found joy and belonging in their new chapter at Westminster.