

## **A Real Hometown Treat**

- Riley Sugarman

With all the online movie stores and “DVD Boxes” that have taken over, how could a tiny movie store survive for twenty years? There are so many amazing reasons why Chet’s Video and Candy Shoppe recently celebrated the big 2-0. First off, we have the best popcorn in the entire universe (and if you’re wondering why I say “we,” I happen to spend my Saturday nights behind the famous counter). This popcorn consists of kernels, coconut-vegetable oil, salt, and the cliché ingredient: love. Even before acquiring my job, I would stop by just for the popcorn and leave with five boxes. Learning how to make this popcorn was like learning the Krabby Patty formula; I was officially welcomed into the Chet’s family. By the way, I have no clue how I stumbled upon this job. Literally every kid in town has applied for a job at 1 Essex St. at some point, and all I did was ask. A month or so later, Melissa (Chet’s daughter) called me up asking me to fill in, and the rest is history.

If you need another incentive to drop the competition, Chet’s customer service is stellar. My fellow employees and I get paid to watch movies, make popcorn, and chat with townies. Who wouldn’t want a job like that? The Chet’s staff is so happy all the time because we love our jobs. That feeling when your recommendation proves successful is extremely gratifying. People often say, “But what about DVD vending machines? It’s only a buck!” Personally, I have never ventured into the dark corner of Stop & Shop, the home of a DVD Box, but I’m pretty sure it isn’t nearly as inviting as the homey smell of Chet’s. The witty humor of Chet Strout is irreplaceable. Chet transfers VCR tapes into DVDs, provides outstanding recommendations, and has a relationship with everyone who walks through the front door. He puts up with the infinite amount of children on half days, politely deals with irate customers, and is always up for a good laugh. A huge reason why Chet’s is still strong is because of the very man himself.

Lately, so many people have told me that Chet’s won’t hang on much longer because Netflix is taking over. They question why people would drive those two miles out of their way when they can get it right on their computer. Unless there’s a snowstorm and you absolutely have to watch that last episode of Lost, there is no reason why you can’t get up and drive those five minutes. Believe me, the struggle is not real. Why do you think Chet’s is the ONLY video store around? Because we have so many loyal customers who will happily go the extra mile out of their way to stop in and grab a flick! Still not sold? Does your online company provide FREE popcorn with every rental? I think not. Can you purchase a bag of M&Ms to enjoy with your flick online? I don’t think so. Are you greeted with the smell of freshly popped popcorn and sense of home whenever you walk up to a DVD Box? Nope! Chet’s Video and Candy Shoppe is one of the last remaining video stores within driving distance for a reason: there is no place like Chet’s because Chet’s is home.

### **Q&A with Chet and Carrie Strout:**

*Why a video store?*

**Carrie:** Chet, my boyfriend at the time, had a passion for movies, so we decided to go for it.

**Chet:** It was something I had really wanted to do, and at the time I was working at a video store and as a bartender. I liked the way I could interact with the customers and relate with them.

**Carrie:** It was the perfect thing for his skill set, and he was game for it.

*Did you always know this was something you wanted to do?*

**Chet:** I don't think I always knew I was going to do it; I thought at one point I would be running my own bar or restaurant.

*Favorite movie(s)?*

**Chet:** Chinatown (thriller), Edward Scissorhands (drama), Young Frankenstein (comedy), Saving Private Ryan (war), and To Kill a Mockingbird (classics).

**Carrie:** Rear Window (Hitchcock), and any great mystery.

*What is your favorite part of owning a video store?*

**Chet:** My interaction with the customers.

**Carrie:** My favorite part is having made an impact in Marblehead, because it's more than just a store, it's the center of town. People love coming here; it's just a little old-fashioned store and you don't really get the feel of it anywhere else.

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