

Their Couple Goals Are Cuckoo

Mistakenly, I'd pictured the people shopping for a cuckoo clock to be older but a couple in their early forties showed up at my Mom's door. They had arrived to to buy a non-working clock my Mom was selling. I was surprised by their young age and I knew I had to know their story.

They were as astonished as I had been when when I asked them if they'd ever been interviewed about their personal history and their cuckoo clock collection. No, they'd never been asked about their hobby before. We scheduled a meeting for a few weeks later at their home. There I'd find out how the couple ticks.

A Hobby With Couple Goal Benefits



Shaun, Audrey and their life size cuckoo clock greet me at their door.

The clock is poised in the doorway, 5 feet tall from tip to tail. This clock style is known as 'After The Hunt'. It dominates the entryway and demands attention.

The group of us marvel at the carved regal details. This clock could easily overlook a great hall in a castle or command a place of importance in a lodge.

Suspended on the clockcase are an ensnared hare and a limp neck pheasant. Hand-carved detailing includes feathers, oak leaves, acorns, and the powder horn. A stag's head tilts from the peak of the clock, a heavy rack of antler. We admired it mightily. It was easy to see why this majestic clock is a prized possession.

At 50 awkward pounds, "After The Hunt" was cradled into the house by three people with it's rack of antlers removed. The clock is only 40 years old and unbelievably the original cuckoo was made of plastic. The former owner replaced the plastic with a 120-year-old cuckoo.

It took two people to hang it securely. It is the only clock in the house that would require **professional** ONSITE clock repair.

During my visit, Audrey clambers up a step stool, measuring her own height against the ornate five-foot clock hung in the entryway.

Multiple adventures and 30 Clocks In One Year

They both share a mutual admiration for hand-hewn works and antiques, and that appreciation of detail, along with the art, mechanics and craftsmanship of cuckoo clocks, matches their innate interest.

A medical assistant, Audrey has to get the details right. Her

skills, personality and conversation draws folks in. Those traits are a perfect fit for her work in geriatrics.

A home builder by trade, the hunt and restoration of the clocks helps Shaun unwind.

Shaun and Audrey took up the shared hobby of collecting and repairing cuckoo clocks little more than a year ago. Often they spend weekends or evenings after work scouting cuckoos together. During these drives they talk about the interesting people they meet:

“One couple that we met was one of our lengthiest visits. They didn’t want us to leave. They kept talking about all kinds of neat stuff. German Christmas trinkets. She was from Germany. She had a bunch of stuff from Germany.

She was excited to meet a couple who were as interested as we were. She said ‘for your age to be as interested and as knowledgeable as you are is kind of unbelievable.

You know, it was hard for her to fathom that people our age actually wanted these things.”

Pride in Restoration

Both Shaun and Audrey fill me in on features and mechanics as we tour the collection of clocks hung to advantage throughout the house and in the workshop.

Theirs is a self-taught hobby using YouTube video advice about materials, mechanisms, repair, and restoration.

Knowing I had little knowledge of the sound chamber and bellows of a cuckoo, Shaun demonstrates how they work. He shared a tidbit told to him by an old-time clock repairman. They noted that paper for bellows repair was a dear commodity back in the day. Because currency is almost indestructible

with its rag content, it was sometimes substituted to repair the bellows of a cuckoo clock.

While they go on their hunt for older cuckoo clocks, they keep their eyes open for a clock from a by-gone era for a clock repair that would have bellows fabric replaced with currency.

Admiring The Inner Workings And Craftsmanship Of The Clocks

Telling time involves the intricacy of the clockworks. The gongs, pendulums, gears, mechanism, sound chambers, bellows, timing of the music, weights, automata, fittings and humidity all play a role keeping a clock sound and in working order.

Shaun and Audrey have fine tuned the adjustments needed to keep cuckoos TIMELY, and share their knowledge enthusiastically.

Many clocks themselves have a lifespan of 30 to 40 years. Checking the mechanisms, cleaning, oiling and keeping them intact increases the lifespan of a cuckoo clock. None of the clocks at the Vacca home run all the time.



The work Audrey does dusting, cleaning, oiling, waxing and refinishing the clock compliments the bench time Shaun spends on the workings. Parts can be culled from clocks that can't be repaired.

The couple have restored clocks that have been tucked into a corner and neglected, coated in dust, with years of mistreatment. Soot, nicotine, humidity and damage to parts can all wreak havoc, keeping these old-time clocks from functioning well.

The Intrinsic Value Of Time-Honored Possessions

Black Forest clocks exclusively fill their collection, displaying a variety of styles and vintages. One of the categories of Black Forest Clocks includes the chalet-style that became popular in the 1940s and 1950s.

Throughout their home, the clocks cast a magical spell with their ticking whimsy. Amid the whirring, automata on the novelty clocks that kiss, dance, toast, saw and cluck. Each clock has the inevitable cuckoo whistling its tune every hour

and half-hour interval. There are clocks that are wound daily and clocks that run for eight days before needing to be rewound.

Style preferences? Shaun admires the hunt clocks while Audrey enjoys the magic of the novelty clocks.

A Family Bond

Family members have joined in the adventure after Shaun and Audrey send over the latest videos and pictures.

- While working in a thrift store, a cousin finds a unique cuckoo clock that is added to the collection.
- And an eleven-year-old second cousin waits for each new video, enthralled with the clockworks, dreaming of tinkering, too.

The Cuckoo's Net

The clocks have cast a net over their lives in many ways.

- A multi-day synchronization marathon of family members running clock to clock and room to room to time the chorus. (Afterward, an uncle wonders, "how do you deal with the sound of the clocks going all the time.")
- Delivery men taking selfies with the entryway clock.
- Tutoring a clock shop owner how to keep her cuckoos clocks in top shape.
- Coffee klatches with sellers whose reminiscences are worth sipping an extra cup or two.
- Dressing as the Bavarian couple characters from their clocks.
- After a German native regaled them about tourism and Black Forest history, there are thoughts of future travel there, despite Shaun's landlubber tendencies.
- The joy in teaching others how to clean and maintain

their own cuckoo clocks.

- The pure pleasure of looking at the details of and the wonder of the workings, still stopping Shaun and Audrey in their tracks to admire the simplicity and beauty of the clocks.
- Busting a move when chicken dance ditty plays.



Modelled after cuckoo clock characters, Shaun and Audrey attend a costume party: Shaun dressed as a Bavarian man and Audrey as St Pauli-style girl.

Spur of the Moment Adventures

A long day may be capped by a trip to look at a clock and shake off the cares of the day. Sometimes, an impromptu visit to look at a clock in a distant city means a chance to explore a new part of the state. Once, a 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ hour trip to St. Augustine turned into a day of visiting the city as tourists. This hobby offers lots of opportunities to enjoy one another's company, even after 20 years and counting. These four-hour drives are full of camaraderie.

A Unique Hobby

Some friends laugh at their hobby, but it is one that enriches their lives in many ways. They've bonded over a shared experience, made new friends of strangers, and met others who are interested and knowledgeable about their hobby. It's their personal history!

Now What?

The next step in their collection is replacing some of their current clock collection with antique clocks. Many of the clocks they own are recent, within the past 30 or 40 years.

There is still the thrill of exploring all the different types and styles of clock, and discovering a clock that is unique to their collection.

You can set your watch on this guarantee. One day soon, one of them will find a clock on their lunch hour, setting a day long text thread in motion. Even if they're bone tired at the end of their workday, they'll enthusiastically jump in the car together, flocking to another cuckoo adventure.

