

Longtime Lafayette institution Clocks, Etc. closing

By Elaine Borden Chandler



Photo Elaine Borden Chandler

Scott Hampton and Wendy Tamis in Clocks Etc. holding a clock they have reserved for themselves.

Clocks, Etc., the beloved clock and art store, has officially announced that it will be permanently closing soon. Located in La Fiesta Square, the store and its variety of antique grandfather clocks, whimsical animal clocks, birdfeeders, wooden earrings, reliable Seiko alarms, and local art is a familiar spot for most Lafayette residents. The owners — Scott Hampton, a clockmaker, and Wendy Tamis, a professional harpist — could be seen in the shop almost every day for years. Both of which will still be working once the store closes, but closing the store will give them some time to relax after a 48-year run.

Hampton went to school in San Francisco to become a clockmaker. He opened The Old Timer Watch and Clock Shop in Lafayette in 1976, selling antique clocks in the space that now houses Wine Thieves. After Hampton started to add in new clocks and art, he changed the store's name to Clocks, Etc. During this time, Hampton and Tamis met at a food co-op meeting, splitting a flat of eggs and exchanging phone numbers.

Together they continued to expand Clocks, Etc. and in 1999 they moved to the much larger and more central space in La Fiesta Square. "Scott had been there for 23 years but when we moved here,

people thought we were a new business," said Tamis.

Tamis received her university degree in flute performance but, having also majored in harp, quit playing flute once she had her degree and focused exclusively on harp. She now performs both solo and with several orchestras in the Bay Area. As the principal harpist of the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, she performed with Beck this July. She has also played harp with Pavarotti, Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra, Josh Groban, and Idina Menzel.

One of her favorite jobs is playing at Rêve Bistro, where she plays pop music and ballads on their patio two nights a week during summertime. She began to play there after Covid began and all her other harpist jobs abruptly stopped, and has returned there every summer since then. She has also played with the Campolindo orchestra for two of their shows, "Phantom of the Opera" and "Cinderella." "That's another one my really favorite jobs," Tamis said wholeheartedly, "Those kids are amazing."

At Clocks, Etc., Hampton's favorite jobs usually involve French carriage clocks. Very small and made with intricate inner movements, they are the kind of challenge that Hampton enjoys. One of his favorite repairs to come to the shop was an Au-

docron by Chrono-Art, a 1979 mushroom shaped clock that, when compressed, chimed out the hours and minutes. "The guy was a genius with electronics," Hampton explained with admiration. Another clock he fixed, an English fusée mahogany wall clock, was so beautiful he told the owner to call him if he ever sold it. 10 years later, Hampton received a call and enthusiastically bought the fusée clock for their home.

For Hampton, one of the best parts of Clocks Etc. is getting to work with well-designed and crafted clocks. "I'll do not so nice quality," he laughed a little. "But I really like quality pieces." For Tamis, one of the most interesting parts has been seeing the unusual clocks made by artisans that customers have found on their travels and brought to the store.

The store itself carries a variety of local art, reflecting their connection and commitment to their community. Hampton started the Lafayette Arts and Wine Festival and Tamis devised the Lafayette Artisan Walk. They have known many of their customers for years and have been receiving a combination of congratulations on their retirement and mourning for the loss of the store. "It's been an outpouring of love," said Tamis. "We feel really connected."

Once the store officially closes and they have that extra time, Tamis and Hampton plan on camping in the mountains this year and traveling next year. They are currently looking for a small office space for customers to pick up and drop off repairs and will be volunteering at the Arts and Wine Festival. "We're still going to be involved in things," added Tamis, "We love this community. We're just going try to have a little more time."

Clocks Etc. will officially close when everything is sold.

Speed limits reduced around Lafayette

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The majority of the new speed limits within Lafayette school zones are 15 mph. These lower range speed limits were chosen because the mortality rate of a

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