

Getting to work on time

Contributed by GLEN PARKER - Chronicle Herald

BRIDGETOWN — David Beckner has time for his customers.

He's a certified watchmaker and operates Bridgetown Watch and Clock Repair. So what he's really trying to do is create time for his customers by making their old clocks and watches work again.

"I look at whatever comes through the door. Antique clocks, with sentimental value, are a very strong part of my business," Mr. Beckner said.

While some of the old clocks and watches he repairs are valuable, most are simply family heirlooms that owners want to see working again. Mr. Beckner does his best to make that happen.

He's been a watch and clockmaker since 1990.

Originally from Barrie, Ont., Mr. Beckner moved to Bridgetown after family members bought their retirement home in this quiet Annapolis Valley town.

"I really enjoyed Bridgetown and Nova Scotia. At first, I didn't think I'd be able to make a living here but I thought the change of pace would be nice. Now we just love it here," he said. Although he does watch repair, the majority of his business involves clocks. They come to his shop from places as far away as Antigonish, Truro, Ottawa, Sydney, the South Shore, Halifax and all over the Annapolis Valley.

Americans, after vacationing here, have returned with clocks in need of repair.

Some of the clocks he has fixed are mantle clocks, grandfather clocks, Dutch wall clocks, ship clocks, Vienna regulators, mission-style wall clocks. They were made by clockmakers from all over the world.

They have one thing in common. They need some attention from a qualified clock repair technician.

"You need a lot of patience to do this work. It's only through experience that I know if (the clock or watch) is a lemon or not," he said.

"There are few recall notices for old timepieces, unlike car repair. The most difficult jobs I get are clocks that have been repaired before. That can make it more difficult to repair."

"If I can't repair a clock, I will tell the customer there is no point in leaving it with me."

The oldest clock he has worked on was a British lantern clock that dated between the 1600s and 1700s.

It came complete with a rope pendulum and only one hand because it was not accurate enough to require two hands.

Mr. Beckner continues to learn through trade journals and chat rooms on the Internet. He graduated from Toronto's George Brown College's watch making program in 1989 and apprenticed at the Museum of Time, in Cookstown, Ont. which is no longer in business.

"I really wanted to learn this trade. My first assignment was to service all the antique clocks at the museum," he laughed.

It doesn't matter if a clock is 50 years old or 350 years old, he still guarantees his repair work for one year.

"I really love my work. I think I came into that honestly, and at a young age," he said. "You know what they say — if you love your job you'll never work a day in your life."

(gparker@herald.ca)