

Grandparents with webcam become new online stars

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Bruce and Esther Huffman kiss during an interview Thursday, Sept. 15, 2011, in McMinnville, Ore. The elderly McMinnville couple has gained unexpected fame after their accidental webcam video reached viral status on YouTube. The three-minute clip of Bruce and Esther Huffman's attempt to snap a photograph on their new laptop computer had reached more than 285,000 viewers by Wednesday evening. (AP Photo/Rick Bowmer)

(AP) -- It slowly began to dawn on Esther and Bruce Huffman that perhaps they were being filmed.

"Warning," the gray-haired, bespectacled grandmother reads off the screen. "You must stop recording before trying to close cyber link."

Pause. "Maybe this recorded us," says the neatly coiffed, rosy-cheeked man next to her.

"Aw, gee," Esther replies.

The realization came toward the end of a nearly three-minute video that has launched the retired Oregon couple to YouTube stardom. They had unwittingly captured their first attempt at learning how to work the webcam on a new laptop.

The Huffmans met a couple of years after Bruce's first wife died, at the retirement complex in which they both lived. She liked his vivacity; he thought she would be a sturdy rudder to his boundless energy.

In the video, she plays the straight man as she tries to make a serious attempt at the request of their children and grandchildren. He's bouncing in his seat next to her, making monkey faces.

Esther had bought a laptop late this summer. Already a Facebook user, she was asked by her family to try recording videos for the amusement of the grandchildren.

In mid-August, the couple sat in front of their laptop, fiddling with the controls of a [video recording](#) program. Somehow, they got the program running. Somehow, they pressed "record."

It was filming as Bruce jokingly fretted about his appearance. "I'm so sad, Esther, I'm so sad," Bruce says with a sad-clown expression. "Look at all the wrinkles up there and the cracks in my head."

There is singing.

"Hello my darling, hello my baby, hello my ga-doh-go," Bruce intones, sliding from Looney Tunes into gibberish. "Lala-te-ki-ka."

Bruce makes faces, leaning close to the laptop screen and blowing out

his cheeks: "Now look at the monkey. That's a pretty good monkey!"

When the couple realizes the webcam might have been recording their antics, they stiffen. But their 21-year-old granddaughter, Mindy, saw the video's potential. With their permission, she uploaded the file, dubbing it "[Webcam](#) 101 for Seniors." By Thursday, it was nearing 3 million views on YouTube.

In the crush of media that has descended on them, the Huffmans struggle to explain what made the video so compelling. After all, it was just a couple minutes of two Oregonians in a retirement community doing ... well, not much.

Perhaps, Esther said, people were attracted to its joy. We're under such a negative news barrage daily, she said. War, crime, natural disasters - wouldn't people rather watch an 86-year-old man singing Looney Tunes?

Lynette Paulson, Esther's daughter, ventured that the unmitigated happiness in the video resonates with viewers.

"They want to see that joy," Paulson said. "It just brings you up."

Or maybe, said 27-year-old grandson Luke Erickson, it shows the possibility that age doesn't mean infirmness or discontent, but that two spectacularly unself-conscious people eight decades on are capable of happiness and supporting and loving each other.

"I don't know how to do this," Esther complains in the video.

Bruce leans in to her.

"Whatever you do," he says, "you do fine."

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