

[Magazine](#) > [Your Family History On Film](#)

# YOUR FAMILY HISTORY ON FILM

By [Caroline Phillips](#)

I'm sitting surrounded by a pile of 31 of my mini DV camcorder tapes and 15 VHS ones. Bear with me. I know this doesn't sound fascinating. But I am almost crying, actually. I'm the least techie person in the world. I do know that video is no longer, that it doesn't exist, that it has gone in a puff of smoke to techie hell. And so I've lost access to hours of much-loved films of my kids in nursery school nativity plays, end-of-term concerts, my children at their first to 13th birthdays, that first swim, first tooth out.... You get the gist.

Let me rewind (spot the word that comes from my world, the days of video). I hadn't been able to watch any of these films for years, not since our last video player went to the techie crematorium. But suddenly it's dawned on me that I am not going to be able to watch any of the films ever again. I scour Ebay, pathetically, to see if I can find an old video recorder. My husband giggles at the idea, telling me such items went out with Sony Walkmans (remember them?). And then....oh serendipity....the head of a family office — a man who looks after a handful of ultra high net worth individuals — recommends Lemongrove Productions, the service that he uses for his clients.

It turns out that Lemongrove, a family-owned business, sorts out your cherished family films, DVDs, photos, miles of cine film, acres of home-made movies and slides, and stores them for you digitally. Or they will edit them and turn them into a professional film for you. Or, indeed, they will film your family and family events afresh with broadcasting quality shots, creating beautiful films. Clients' written testimonials range from 'crying' (with wonder) to 'crying' (with joy).

There are few people better placed to do the job. (No, this is not paid advertorial. It's a genuine tip about a tip-top service. You're welcome.) Ed Danson, founder of Lemongrove, used to shoot footage that was watched by millions of people. That was in his capacity as a TV sports cameraman. He brings the same eye, skills and quality to his work on family movies. Ed's wife, Charlotte, runs the business with him in between shooting hundreds of hours of footage of their children, Charlie and Joe. "We understand how precious family footage is," says Charlotte, "but also appreciate how overwhelming it can be when it comes to wondering what to do with it."

Ed arrives at my house raring to collate and create my family media. He's enthusiastic about taking my old family films to transfer onto new technology. He takes all my footage, puts it into chronological order (from videos with nappies to ones where my girls are nearly taller than me). Using state-of-the-art industry equipment, he transfers it into a digital format, loading it onto a portable hard drive that becomes my personal digital archive.

Lemme say that again: the techie Tyrannosaurus (me) now boasts an, ahem, personal digital archive. "That allows you to watch, edit and burn copies of your films at home," says Ed. I don't understand why I'd want to burn his work, as it's lovely. But I don't say anything.

The 46 VHS and mini DV tapes that I sent to Lemongrove have come back on a three-inch by three-inch hard drive. Not only have they shrunk, but I can watch them now. Result. "We keep all the raw footage, the original transfer; we don't delete the files until you tell us," adds Ed.

For those who wish to go one step further, Lemongrove will make a bespoke film, transforming hours of your home video footage. Ed and Charlotte have helped hundreds of families to turn their home videos into films. “Whenever possible, we’ll visit clients at home to collect their footage and photographs and discuss their ideas for their film and play you some examples of our previous work,” he says. (That meeting is obligation-free and with no charge for it).

The dynamic duo works on the film until the client is happy — no charge for the extra time — and cut it to music of your choice (they license the music) and include titles, photographs and, if you want them, special effects. Ed or Charlotte bring each draft to the client to check — alternatively, they upload it to a secure website for clients to view at leisure — making a note of any changes the client would like, and then they do the final edit. Lemongrove streamlines approximately each hour you’ve shot into a slick 5-minute offering. “We supply it in any format from DVD to blu-ray, iPhone, iPad or more,” explains Ed.

They don’t just collate your work though. Lemongrove also create original films. “We do a film shoot in which we interview you and your children to capture who they are and what makes them tick,” says Ed. “We spend a day filming wherever you choose. The footage is then edited into a 10 to 15 minute ‘Chapter.’” You can leave it at that or — as most families do — repeat the process, filming a ‘Chapter’ every year or so. Ed shows me one of these films. “Alec likes fighting, but I like to play with my favourite toys,” says one child, grassing gravely on his brother.

Lemongrove Productions also offers their version of *This is Your Life*, that biographical television documentary hosted by Eammon Andrews and then by Michael Aspel. Lemongrove use interviews with friends and family alongside family photos and footage to reveal the subject's life story or to create family biographies.

A particularly moving film they made was for someone's funeral, which was shown in addition to the eulogies. For a 100th birthday, various family members of the soon-to-be centenarian answered the question, 'What does the birthday lady mean to you?' The result is touching — even without knowing the subject. Yet another is a life shown in photographs for someone who had never shot any film. "We scan and retouch the photographs, getting rid of scratches and coffee ring stains."

And suddenly, inspiration strikes, and I realise that there's a ton of footage on my smart phone. And on my old phones that I use no longer. You know, the phones that have died and are just sitting in the drawer waiting for me to do something with them like....like.... "Ed," I ask, tentatively, "Can you make a film out of all my smart phone photos and videos?" And, of course, the answer's yes. Yes they can.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, go to [www.lemongroveproductions.com](http://www.lemongroveproductions.com) or call +44 (0)20 8090 3049.