

## CONSUMER WATCH

# VHS memories need new format

**Y**our memories are dying.

I'm not talking about your brain (although that may be true), I'm talking about the memories you have stored away in closets and on garage shelves.

I'm talking about all those home movies on VHS tapes and film.



**Rick DeBruhl**

Call 12 for Action

Most people don't realize that videotape has a life span. While the plastic case and tape will last for a hundred

years, the little magnetic particles that create the video can only hold on for so long. It's not like a picture that slowly fades. You can't see the video falling apart.

The only way you'll know is by sticking the tape into a player and watching. Even then, you have to watch the entire tape. The first 20 minutes might be fine, but then the audio may drop out.

How long will they last? I've seen various experts predict anywhere between 10 and 20 years. Because we live in a dry climate, it's possible they could last longer, but I wouldn't count on it.

Ironically, those old 8mm films your parents shot have a longer life span. Stored properly, they're probably good for 40 or 50

years. Unfortunately, because they're older, they're reaching the end as well.

The good news is you don't have to panic. Both the film and the video can be salvaged. And while it may not be a crisis today, it's probably something you should consider doing soon if you have older film or videotape.

The VHS tapes are the easiest to save. You can buy DVD recorder for less than \$300 that has a VHS player built in. Many offer what they call "one-touch" recording. Pop in a fresh DVD, put a VHS tape in the player and just hit record. A DVD recorder-only machine will cost you less than \$200.

Your film is a little trickier. You could buy an old projector on eBay and play the movie on a screen or wall. You could also use your camcorder to record the images. It won't look good, however, because film uses 24 frames per second and video uses 30 frames per second.

Your best bet is to find a company that will transfer it for you. Shop around to find both a decent price as well as someone you can trust. After all, they're priceless.

You spent a lot of time and effort making those memories. Take a little more to save them.

Reach Call 12 for Action from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. weekdays at (602) 260-1212 or 1-866-260-1212.