

Community & People

# In the wake of economy crash, Onalaska woman turns hobby into job

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Our world is connected. 50 years ago instant cameras were only just becoming popular, if you were listening to the #1 Billboard Single ("Ballad of the Green Berets" by Sgt. Barry Sadler) it was either live or you had a 4-track player, and the only videos came shining, sometimes in color, through the television.

Now we have all of that in our phones.

It surrounds us: uploaded pictures and videos with crystal clear color and quality, the endless stream of Facebook status updates, the hottest and most trending songs. It boils down to the thrill and increasing ease of documentation (combined with an innate love to share our stories with the world).

But what about preserving the stories?

Now that we can share media instantly, what was once an inability to document memories has become an inability to document the appropriate memories- the highlights of memorable events.

Luckily, Linda O'Connell can help.

She started Take 5 Productions: an independent media editing business in Onalaska, aimed to

preserve the essence of life's most precious moments.

It began with her editing and producing an annual "highlight film" of the family; things like birthdays, vacations, and a Merry Christmas conclusion. O'Connell said she started making these simply because she enjoyed editing and the family really liked them. Then other friends and family began asking her for videos of their memories once they saw that O'Connell had a knack for editing, and the demand went up.

After a while, O'Connell said, once enough people started asking, she started making some money. People would tell her, "no, no, I gotta pay you for it" until she began accepting the pleas.

By 2007, she knew this was something fun that she could make money from, which proved to be timely.

When the economy crashed in the late 2000's, O'Connell, along with many others, were left unemployed and searching for answers. So in 2009 she decided to make her hobby profitable. She set up booths at craft shows in Monroe County and La Crescent's Applefest as her friends and family continued spreading the word.

"In a way," O'Connell said, "being laid off was the best thing that has ever happened to me."

And she maintains her mission today: to preserve and create lasting memories.

To do it, she now has the equipment to take any media you can find (VHS, Beta, camcorder, film, photos) and transfer it to a platform that can be used today. She brings your old, dusty memories back to life.

And if you want more than just the transfer, she trims and edits the footage to create a 7ish-minute montage clip. O'Connell believes the shorter clips are a more refined method of documenting and sharing our stories.

Think about it: Most people don't want to sit through a two-hour video, nor would do so while scrolling through the Internet. So making a shorter video is easier to show friends and family, and even more digestible on the web. Its once removed from the constant flow of information yet more refined than a two hour clip. As she says, in a shorter video, you get nothing but the best of the best.

She isn't worried about the lack of sentimentality in a shorter video, either. Referring to creating slideshows, she says, "If I don't get you to laugh and cry during a slideshow, I haven't done my job." She even joked that if customers need to watch segments of a refined video before it's completed, she keeps a box of Kleenex in her office desk just in case.

And if 2016 becomes the year of finding more cost effective options for weddings, Take 5 may prove to be a viable option. Wedding videographers can cost a couple thousand dollars and

can be a hidden cost in wedding finances. If you can shoot the wedding footage, Take 5 will give you wedding DVD's for a sliver of that price.

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