THE GUARDIAN

College of Court Reporting

Issue 4

(continued on pg. 2)

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Slow down and everything you are chasing will come around and catch you."

- John De Paola

Inside this issue:

100-PLUS YEARS OF OUR PROFESSION (AND COUNTING)

BY DIANA NETHERTON

The duties of a court reporter, often referred to as a stenographer, have essentially remained the same for the past 100 years. The primary task of a court reporter is to capture the spoken word.

Technology, of course, has made the job of a court reporter much easier. From feather quills to computers, the evolution of the profession has been quite remarkable. Before the invention of an official shorthand, court proceedings were taken down in full writing. Of course, getting everything accurately was probably a stretch, but a basic summation of what occurred was recorded. The proceedings were then put into some form of a legible document, today referred to as a transcript, which could later be reviewed by the attorneys and judges for appeal purposes.

In the early 19th century, Isaac Pitman invented a phonetic shorthand theory that enabled stenographers to record proceedings at quicker speeds. This theory of shorthand was adopted by pen writers throughout the English-speaking world. Pitman then produced a varied number of new editions of his theory. However, some of his modifications did not bode well with the international shorthand community. One of the major changes was the placement of dot vowels. He reversed the order of the dot vowels and published his new theory in his following edition.

The slight modification rattled a few foundations throughout the steno community. After spending months, even years, crafting their skills with the original version, writers were faced with having to adopt these basic changes if they wanted to keep up with progression trends. The British, in traditional stiff upper lip fashion, accepted the changes, stating that the modification would be the last they would accept. The Americans, however, in true rebellious fashion, were less accommodating. Some adopted the new theory, however, others produced their separate shorthand versions, keeping the vowels where they originally were. This resulted in several different versions, although not too dissimilar to the original version.

Fractions of these shorthand theories were used for many years until the arrival of a young, ambitious Irish immigrant called John Gregg. Often referred to as the "Apple MacIntosh of the 19th Century," a new version of shorthand that Gregg created had many more appealing factors. Still phonetic in nature, Gregg's shorthand proved to be more efficient than Pitman. It allowed the stenographer to keep the pen on the surface of the paper, so hand movements flowed easier. Pitman's version had both thick and thin lines, whereas Gregg's shorthand version depended on light strokes. Although both versions were used, in the end it was Gregg's creation that won the popular vote. Gregg still remains the most popular version of pen shorthand to this day in North America.

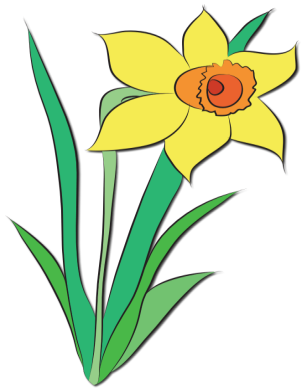
Despite these advances in efficient notetaking, the pace of technology quickly caught up with

Students of the Month

Morgan Maloney

Morgan has had a great start to the semester. She has been on top of her assignments and has been moving up the speed ladder at a great pace. Your hard work is paying off, Morgan!

You're going to make a fine reporter very soon.



Erin Ramsey

One of Erin's instructors had this to say about her when being nominated, "Erin has been working exceptionally hard this semester. She is consistently writing up SEs and SAPs every day. Her hard work is going to pay off greatly."

Keep up the great work, Erin!

stenographers at the dawn of the 20th Century with the invention of the first functional stenotype machine. Created in 1877 by an American named Miles Bartholomew, this remarkable machine, comprising only ten keys, enabled the user to use the keys depressed singularly or simultaneously to capture the spoken word with a combination of dots and dashes. There were various improvements to this original prototype over the ensuing years. The modern steno machine keyboard that most resembles the keyboard used today by stenographers made its debut a few decades later. Still based on the use of phonetics, the machine enabled the operator to create briefs, allowing for entire phrases to be taken down at once. Extra keys were added, and letters were assigned to each key or a combination thereof. A typical brief, for example, is the phrase beyond a reasonable doubt. These four words can be written simultaneously, and would look like this on a typical stenotype machine: "KWR A EU R D." All it took to record this simple phrase was one stroke; all relevant keys being depressed at once. This was transferred to a roll of paper, similar in appearance to a grocery store bill, which was then typed up by the stenographer or a note reader, who could decipher these mysterious combination of letters.

The demise of Pitman/Gregg shorthand pen writers in the court systems began much earlier, however, in 1914 at a national shorthand speed competition. Hundreds of hopeful pen writers crowded the convention, when in walked a group of teenage competitors. Sponsored by the Universal Stenotype Company, these upstart youths were trained to operate steno machines at equal or in excess speeds of the most seasoned of pen writers. These machine writers managed to win every contest and walked off with all of the awards. Alarmed at this new technological development, and fearing for their livelihood, contest organizers pulled the plug on the national competition for five years. However, by the time the next national competition returned in 1919, the point had been made. Even though machine writers were banned from the competition, it was too late. Machine writers had already begun to replace pen writers in courtrooms across America.

Today there are thousands of court reporters employed in various aspects of the profession. Developing computer technology has enabled court reporters to be useful in other areas besides the courtroom. One of these areas is called CART, or Communication Access Real-time Translation. This enables the end user to read almost simultaneously what is being spoken on a computer or television screen. Specialized software is programmed to translate the reporter's machine strokes, turning the seemingly unintelligible mass of letters into a comprehensible language. This is particularly helpful for people who are hard of hearing, who use the services of court reporters to follow live proceedings such as the news, government hearings, sporting events, and even in university courses.

Because of these rapid technological advances over the past 100 years, the future of court reporting has remained a pertinent concern for those in the profession. There has always been speculation of what new invention could completely take over the duties of a court reporter. Budget cuts, lack of funding, and the economy have all played a part in the reduction of reporters, and some government entities have implemented the use of electronic recording device systems. However, headways in technology have also assisted the profession. The widest area of changing direction is in the captioning field. Several captioning

services are finding that there are more captioning hours to fill than trained stenographic captioners.

Despite the shifting trends that have affected the reporting profession, there is one fact that cannot be disputed, and that is the accuracy of having a live reporter at a proceeding. In the words of Vykki Morgan, RDR, CRI, CPE (Ret.), a court reporting instructor at Cerritos College in California: "Costs and technology can't completely wipe out a reporter's work duties as long as an accurate record is treasured and regarded as essential." And because the profession of reporting has evolved and grown with the modern innovation, it is almost certain that reporters will be used and will remain essential for an accurate record for hopefully another 100 years or more.

From the JCR

March Evaluations Passed

These students have all passed one or more SAP evaluations during the month of March.

1 SAP

Adrianna Townsend
Angela Viray
Brian Nelson
Camille Holmes
Christine Saylor
Cynthia Shellum
Daphne Tardy
Debra Selsavage
Eric Luft
Gabrielle Mosher
Geneva Wildcat
Jacqlyn Garcia
Jennifer Rotstein
Jennifer Wesner
Jessica Bustos
Jessica Williams
Kate Hargis
Keely Nelsen
Kristina Meseck
Lori Ingram
Mackenzie Smith
Melissa Hicking
Tracie Blocker
Victoria Huntley
Michael Roberts
Natalie Sandi
Paige Eisenbeisz
Rachel Schmidt
Rhonda Wentzell
Sara Smith
Sara Vaughn
Shannon Gallo
Sindee Baum

Stephanie McGinnis
Stephen Brown

2 SAPs

Alexis Celentano
Brandi Zargo
Brittney Vance
Daisy Cortez
Donna Capolongo
Hannah Wilson
Jennifer Hall
Jennifer Laursen
Jessica Frizzell
Karina Hannah
Kayde Rieken
Summer Vaughan
Taisha Herr
Sumaya Hussein

Linda Day
Mary Cruz Hawkins
Michelle McClean
Oanh Dang

3 SAPs

Abby Geoffroy
Ashley Privett
Elizabeth Awbrey
Emily Senesac
Kolby Garrison
Kristi Perkins
Morgan Maloney

4 SAPs

Cheyenne Leneair
Megan Bowman
Shaylene Mofle

5 SAPs

Baley Moore
Ericka Gibbs

6 SAPs

Laura Kannry

10 SAPs

Eva Miller

14 SAPs

Carrie Johnson

PROVIDING ACCESS IN A CRISIS: CAPTIONING WITH FEMA

BY: DEANNA BAKER

Sheri Smargon, RDR, CRR, CRC, has shared her experiences on social media working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and I thought everyone would enjoy hearing more about these adventures.

Sheri, tell us a little about your background as a CART captioner, I know it's extensive.

I started captioning directly out of court reporting school in 1992, working for our local county commission. We were the first county in the nation to caption its government meetings, and it was in an open caption format, which means that anyone turning to the channel could see the captions, whether they wanted to or not. In the early days, it probably was more of a "not" situation. The people in charge figured if you could write "on that machine," you must be able to caption. Boy, we proved them wrong!

After two years, I moved from Florida to Pittsburgh, Penn., and went to work at VITAC, the country's largest captioning provider. I loved the job, but hated the weather. I'm from Massachusetts originally and thought I missed snow and seasons. Not so much! So after two years, I moved back to Florida and started freelance work for the local court reporting firm who had the contract with the county courthouse for court reporters.

During that time, even though we had a seniority system, I was the only one with any realtime or captioning experience, so I was given the opportunity to realtime a vice presidential debate with Al Gore and Jack Kemp. I was realtiming, and a transcript of my work was being printed every 15 minutes for the hundreds of national and international media that were in attendance. It was quite the experience.

I only did court reporting for a short time because then I got a job with Caption Colorado, captioning from home. I worked there for seven-and-a-half years. During my time with Caption Colorado, I captioned a lot of news, baseball games, and the Olympics a few times.

Then the opportunity to caption in Sydney, Australia, popped up. So I moved to Sydney to work for the Australian Caption Centre. While there, I captioned everything from news and reality TV to sports, like cricket and rugby. It was quite a learning curve because I had to adjust my dictionary to true English spellings (*colour*, *favour*, etc.) I worked there for six months and moved back to Florida, picking up with a few captioning companies and a court reporting firm.

I went to an NCRA Convention & Expo in New York City and ran into my old boss and former NCRA President Kathy DiLorenzo. She told me VITAC was hiring, so I should apply again. I did apply because now they were allowing people to work from home, versus having to move to Pittsburgh. I was hired on by VITAC in 2007.

While there, I captioned everything from CNN to the Stanley Cup Finals to the Olympics. I also captioned a couple of musicals on NBC: "The Sound of Music" and "Peter Pan." Never having seen either the movie or the stage production of either tale, there was a bit of a learning curve for sure!

I left VITAC in January of 2016 to strike out on my own as an independent contractor, trying to find different CART and captioning experiences. My final job with VITAC was captioning the Golden Globe Awards. So I think I went out on a high point.

How is it you started working with FEMA as an independent contractor? What was the hiring process like?

I am the administrator of a group on Facebook called The Captioning Klatch. I started it a few years ago, just as a place to come and talk about all things captioning and CART related. One of our members posted that FEMA was hiring for CART writers, so I looked at the job description and decided to apply.

The hiring process involved a lot of paperwork … reams, it seemed like at times. Eventually, I was given an interview, but no one told me it would be a Skype interview. So I was in my pajamas, with no makeup on, because I was in the middle of my captioning day. I kept my webcam aimed pretty high that day for sure!

I was asked a lot of questions by interviewers, both hearing and Deaf, and then I was given a practical examination, where the

Job Openings

Position: Closed Captioning Specialist

Location: Accuweather, State College, PA

Position: Officialship

Location: Minnesota Judicial Court, various, MN

Position: English Closed Caption Editor

Location: Fullscreen, Playa Vista, CA

If you would like more information about any of these positions, please contact *Natalie.Kijurna@ccr.edu*

interviewers could see me caption. The clip they played for me was a press conference from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Luckily, I had captioned the news from Louisiana during that time, so I had all of those cities and parishes in my dictionary.

A short while after the interview, I was offered the job, contingent on a thorough background check and security clearance. While I have nothing to worry about, having the FBI contact friends and family is kind of freaky!

You were deployed to an assignment in North Carolina. What was an average day, the good and the bad, and how you were helping in this emergency situation? How much notice did you have beforehand?

When there's a disaster and the Joint Field Office (JFO) is opened, that becomes the hub in the state for FEMA employees to go and work. They go out in the field to different locations, called Regional Field Offices (RFOs) but in general, the main administration and IT, etc., are located at the JFO. They work a minimum 12 hours a day, seven days a week, in the first couple of months, just because of the sheer number of things that have to be accomplished to help the disaster survivors.

When I arrived at the JFO, the disaster was so new that in the first few weeks of the aftermath, staff was in a temporary location while they looked for a permanent location. FEMA remains on-site, with a state presence, for quite some time. There is still FEMA staff in Louisiana working on Katrina, if that gives you a timeline. So I was with everyone else in the temporary offices, basically, just finding a spot to sit where I could.

My first day at the temporary JFO, I was issued a FEMA computer, signed paperwork, got login information. All of the usual boring, but necessary, aspects of being on a temporary assignment with the government. I then had to be issued a projector and a portable screen for me to take to any realtime jobs that may be scheduled. When all was said and done, between my personal equipment, a FEMA computer, a projector, and a screen, I had more than 100 pounds of equipment to carry with me.

There are no average days when it comes to a disaster. The slogan is "If you've been to one disaster, you've been to one disaster." Every day is different. I would go into the office at 7 in the morning, and see what the schedule was like for the day. If a disaster site wanted or needed sign language interpreters, they would put in a request and that was added to the interpreters' schedule. And almost always, the meeting was at 5 or 6 at night with a couple hours' drive to get to the location. Because I was the one and only realtime reporter, I was assigned to larger events, so that we could reach more people. Sometimes, it was a gymnasium with 200 people; sometimes, it was a city council chamber with 30 people. Every day was something different.

There were also days where we had no assignments to cover, but I would still go into work at 7. I would work on my dictionary, go through a recently written file to add acronyms or anything I may have gotten wrong. Eventually, on days where I didn't have a meeting, I decided to hook up my projector and aim it toward the wall and practice to whatever I could find on the Internet.

I believe you were gone for two weeks. How were you able to manage your own clients and regular work at home?

Because I work with a great court reporting firm, they were able to take me off the books the week before I deployed. I was initially supposed to deploy to a staging area in Atlanta, Ga., because of the fact there was no office set up in North Carolina yet. So I was already off the books for my court reporting firm and wasn't accepting or bidding on any CART or captioning work. I ended up not going to Atlanta and just having my deployment delayed a week, which was great for me because I had a court reporting training class in Washington, D.C., that I had scheduled months previous to my deployment.
Gratefully, scheduling worked out for me.

College of Court Reporting
455 West Lincolnway
Valparaiso, IN 46385
Phone: 219-531-1459
"Work for yourself...Work for the world!"

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.CCR.EDU

FOLLOW US!

facebook.com/ccr.edu

@collegecourtrep

the_college_of_court_reporting

ccr_rocks

APRIL

Birthdays are in bold print! Happy birthday, CCR students and faculty!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 April Fool's Day
2	3	4	5 **Kodey Knauss**	6 **Mindi Billings** **Kyra Kustin**	7	8
9	10 Passover	11 **Idellah Ashlie**	12	13	14 Good Friday **Patricia Kern**	15
16 Easter Sunday **Shameeka Williams** 	17	18	19	20 **Kristi Wight-Wiggins** **Dessalyn Kimbrough**	21	22 Earth Day
23 **Diane Talbott**	24 **Jessica Williams**	25 **Julie Kjellerson**	26 **Nadine Capps** **Michael Roberts**	27	28 Arbor Day **Tanya Owen** **Darcus Goslin**	29 30