

COURT REPORTER SPOTLIGHT

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How did you get into court reporting?

I think like most court reporters of my time, my parents had a family friend who was a freelance reporter. I was a senior in high school, class of 1964, and had no idea what I wanted to do. I was applying to colleges, but there was no real excitement there, but I had to do something.

I was taking typing as an elective in my senior year and mentioned to the teacher the conversation had about reporting and his eyes lit up. He had a close friend that started reporting school, but quit, and had left his machine at his house, plus had an old Stenograph Theory book that he would lend me, the machine and book and I could see what I think. The machine and myself seemed to click, so the next step was the actual reporting school. The friend's son had gone to a school in NYC, Interboro Institute, so my father and I made the trip into the city to see what the school and course involved, and starting in September of '64, for the next year and seven months, that's where I spent my days, five days a week, working towards my 200s. This was before 225 was the standard.

How has the court reporting profession changed since you started?

When I took my first job in May of '66, it was at the NY State Motor Vehicle Department as a hearing reporter. I was earning \$75 a week (increased to \$100 the second year), plus .25 a page for every page I typed myself. It wasn't until 1969 that I started freelancing and found the agency only had dictation for their reporters. That was faster than typing, but still, you took a deposition and then came back to the office or home and sat and dictated the job into a Stenorette machine – basically a tape recorder with controls on the handset. After a while, the original family friend offered me a position at his freelance agency, which had dictation, and something called note reading. Being the new man at the office, it was split between being dictated or note read. If it was note read, you went over the rough spots in your notes, turned them in, and the typist would type direct from your notes. It was then you learned to write clean, and with conflicts to a minimum, or you were back dictating.

Also, jobs that were original and two (the minimum in NY at the time) to four were done with carbon paper, more than four were done with mimeograph sheets, the waxy sheets that were used for duplication, until Xerox became the norm for all transcripts.

Then the offer to move to federal court in NYC. With trepidation I moved over from the freelance to official realm and being an official at the Southern District of NY, you were one of 31, which in 1973 consisted of 30 men and one woman.

In 1977, something new was about to happen ... the computer! The court reporting world changed forever at that point ... starting with translating at 73 pages an hour, parsing seven pages after a few minutes so you can start editing, to an instant translation (realtime) in the world we live in now.

What do you wish non-reporters knew about the court reporting profession?

The court reporting career has been the most unbelievable ride! The cases I've participated in, the people I've met and the opportunities have been endless. An example of people I have met include: John Lennon and George Harrison of the Beatles, Monty Python, Jacklyn Smith, Bill Wyman of the Rolling Stones, Frankie Valle of the Four Seasons, industry and world leaders and trials too sensitive to talk about. And the career is still in full swing 55 years later!

What has been the secret to your success?

Two things. No more. If you get them down, you've got the whole field locked up.

Whatever theory you start with, know it backwards and forwards, and then forwards and backwards. No matter how far you've gone, there are times that you fall back to your theory. With the computer, don't worry about having every little conflict resolved. I've heard of people spending time on things which will never come up, but they say they have short forms for them IF they do. Spend time on things which will come up: no and know, have and of, it's and its, things like that. Once you have to think of how to write a short form or how to write something, you've lost the next few words. Not worth it. If you have to, write it out according to your theory. That will take less time than the thought and then the stroke of the short form. Short forms are great ... if you remember them!

And the most important: It's only words. Big words, little words, but words just the same. Don't think about them, just write them and go on to the next.