

VOLUME 14 | ISSUE 1

# CCRA

California Court Reporters Association

C C R A O N L I N E



Photo: Sold-Out Crowd at BOOT CAMP | Page 5

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California Court Reporters Association

CCRA ONLINE

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the California Court Reporters Association is to advance the profession of verbatim shorthand reporting by promoting professional reporting excellence through education, research, and the use of state-of-the-art technology; establishing and maintaining professional standards of practice; and advocating before legislative and regulatory bodies on issues which impact the judicial system and others served by the court reporting profession of California.

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# P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E

## NEW BEGINNINGS

By Carlos Martinez, CSR, RPR, CMRS  
President, CCRA

As I was driving back from CCRA's inaugural BOOT CAMP (BC) in Burbank last night listening to the six students in our rented Suburban talking about their experience at BC, I was considering all of the changes that I've seen CCRA go through since October of 2013. It was appropriate that we started 2014 with BC, an idea that Secretary/Treasurer Christy Cannariato came up with a year ago and has worked relentlessly on up and through yesterday's event. We had hoped for 40 to 50 people, and what we ended up with was 160 registrants. 160. I am still both blown away and completely honored by the response. So as I was listening to the conversation in the car, I was thinking about how we got here, and one word kept coming to mind, "Change."

Change can be subtle or it can be sudden. It can be pleasant or it can be unpleasant. But most of all, change is necessary. You cannot keep doing the same thing without change and hope to keep moving forward. Ask the board of directors for Converse shoes. They refused to change their product and went from being the premier athletic shoemaker to a place of irrelevance when Nike introduced a newly designed athletic shoe that launched a multi-billion dollar business for Phil Knight.

Barack Obama in his inaugural address said, ***"Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."*** CCRA, in October of last year, took that notion to heart and began to make a change. When your new board was inducted in October, our first order of business was to change the way that we interacted with the schools and with the students. Knowing that students are the life's blood of this profession, we began reaching out to each school and to every student that we could throughout the state. We revamped the mentorship program. We revamped the school visit program. We instituted a monthly student membership drawing, and we began making contact with the people that we are relying on

to keep the profession moving forward as we move towards finishing our careers: STUDENTS.

With BOOT CAMP, we took our concern that students and new reporters were coming into the job field void of the necessary knowledge on the business and procedures end of reporting to hit the ground running and created a full-day seminar to fill that void. The specifics of what we did are covered in Christy's article inside of this month's Online edition and are also touched on by Rachel Passarella in her article this month.

Now that BOOT CAMP is in the books, we must turn our attention to other pressing matters: The Governor's newly released budget and its effect on reporters working in court; the continuation of the two-year legislative session and the anticipated new legislation affecting our profession; and issues of fairness and representation of the deposition and freelance writers in the profession.

But that's not all that we are focusing our attention on. We know that our association is only as strong as the level of involvement of its members and the Board's willingness to listen to and implement new ideas. Using BC as our launching pad for this year, we have several more changes that we will be making to the structure and the makeup of CCRA. We are excited about those changes, and we know that as they are rolled out, you will be too.

On a personal note, in my short time as president, I have really enjoyed connecting with new people. This weekend, I got to further those new connections by carpooling to BC with six students. The ride from Sacramento to Burbank and back was a lot of fun. Karly, Candy, Sharece, Shivane, Gareth, and Danielle, I count it as a blessing in my life to have been able to spend time with you these past two days, and I look forward to watching you grow and participate in shaping and protecting the reporting profession through CCRA.

To those that made it to BC, a huge thank you. For those that missed it, watch for the next one. And to those members that embrace change and enjoy riding the wave of change, I encourage you to get involved with a CCRA committee this year. There is change coming, and there's nothing better than helping to shape what that change looks like.



## IF YOU CAN INVEST IN ONLY ONE CONVENTION THIS YEAR... MAKE YOUR INVESTMENT COUNT WITH CCRA

Inspired by the overwhelmingly positive feedback from previous convention attendees, CCRA is heading back to the Miramonte Resort & Spa in Indian Wells, California, October 3-5, 2014. Why is this the best investment for your hard-earned dollars?

- 1. PRICE!** CCRA's convention is an incredible value! Other conventions being held in California this year will cost you over \$450, and that's just to get in the door. Their room rates are also higher. Get those CEUs instead with CCRA for just \$349 (students \$165), which includes 5 meals and 2 receptions at a luxurious hotel and spa.
- 2. LOCATION!** The Miramonte Resort & Spa is remarkably close to metropolitan areas of Southern California and Ontario International Airport, yet far enough away to still feel like you're getting a refreshing getaway in the Palm Springs Valley, nestled at the base of the beautifully scenic Santa Rosa Mountains. SoCal residents can pop over just for the day. And did we mention shopping? The Desert Hills Premium Outlets is tantalizingly close.
- 3. NETWORKING!** The convention this year will include two receptions and five meals. Bring those business cards, because you will not only renew friendships with colleagues but also meet more people from your own state who are in the best position to help you expand your career opportunities. Our conventions typically draw over 350 people, more than any other state association in the country.
- 4. SEMINARS:** We are excited about the wide range of seminars we are developing. We have expanded and intensified our offerings on technology and realtime. Plus, interested in CART and captioning? Wondering if you have what it takes? Thinking about transitioning to a new career path? We are introducing a CART/Captioning track. Bring your writer and get some hands-on practical training from some of the top realtimers in California.
- 5. STUDENTS:** When you attend a CCRA convention, we don't track you into a limited number of classes. Your low registration fee admits you to your choice of any of our seminar offerings.

We at CCRA believe reporters and students should attend all the conventions they can. But if you can only afford one in 2014, you will be sorry to have missed CCRA's 104th, our best convention yet.

Like us on Facebook and regularly visit our website to receive all of the exciting details in the coming months.





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# BOOT CAMP

CALIFORNIA COURT REPORTERS ASSOCIATION

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## BOOT CAMP 2014 POSTSCRIPT

By Christy Cannariato, Secretary-Treasurer

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The first BOOT CAMP is now in the books, and I am pleased (and relieved!) to say CCRA scored another tremendous success. In the last two issues, I wrote about the wonderful challenge of being tasked by CCRA to create this event and the fun of navigating all of the unknowns, such as: How many people will register?

As it turns out, four times the number I had conservatively estimated registered, a mind-blowing 160 people! As the beautiful Terrace Room of the Pickwick Gardens Conference Center began to fill, moments before President Carlos Martinez was to take the stage to begin the festivities, and five minutes before my seminar, he sought me out and excitedly said, "Look what you did! You did this! Are you ready?"

I quite unexpectedly burst into tears and started to have a meltdown. I was overwhelmed with the turnout and the pressure now to deliver a valuable program to such a huge crowd. And with all of the manic bustle in that

last week of prepping the entire day, I suddenly realized I hadn't spent enough time prepping my "Depos 101" presentation to my satisfaction, and I was suddenly terrified. Poor Carlos. He took the stage not knowing if I was going to give an effective presentation and start the day out right.

However, five minutes into my presentation, as I began talking about this profession that I love and respect so dearly, all of that negative emotion drained away, and I ended up having a blast on stage speaking to such a kind, receptive audience.

In attendance was a remarkable range of people in the industry, from theory students to senior reporters with 25+ years of experience, traveling from all over California. One reporter journeyed from Oregon and one reporter all the way from Toronto, Canada! Throughout the day, registrant after registrant approached me and movingly

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**

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## POSTSCRIPT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

articulated what CCRA membership and this event meant to them.

BOOT CAMP packed an unbelievable amount of valuable information into a single day, and yet a common refrain in the evaluations was “wish it could have been even longer.” In case you missed it, here’s a rundown of the program for BOOT CAMP 2014:

- Director Rachel Passarella shared valuable advice on how new CSRs can get their careers started via marketing and networking.
- Toni O’Neill, Chair of the Court Reporters Board of California, offered great advice on “Keeping Your CSR License out of Jeopardy.”
- Pat Barkley, founder of Barkley Court Reporters, shared her sage advice on “How to Be a Top-Notch Reporter.”
- Laurie Miller gave tips for navigating the Los Angeles County Courts in the era of privatization in “Working in Court: Eliminating the Fear.”

- Director Carole Browne and Phil Liberatore, CPA, shared tips for keeping your reporting business organized and profitable and away from the IRS’s clutches.
- And finally, Director Saba McKinley gave a very inspiring presentation on CART as a fulfilling career choice in a growing field.

Elsewhere in this issue, you can read the reviews, but to the survey question: “Would you recommend BOOT CAMP to others?” the answer was unanimous: Yes!

To everyone who made the point of speaking with me personally that day, and for all of the kind emails and Facebook messages the next day, thank you so much. Your encouragement validated and confirmed my commitment to CCRA’s mission of education and advocacy on behalf of its membership.

President Carlos Martinez is generously giving me a day off, then insisting I get to work planning the next BOOT CAMP. I would welcome your ideas for how to make it even bigger and better. Contact me at christy.cannariato@cal-ccra.org.

# THE BOOT CAMP REVIEWS ARE IN

## Overall Impressions of BOOT CAMP:

*“Absolutely amazing! The presentation from Toni O’Neill from the CR Board was a good review and reminder of how to be a professional. Christy (Cannariato)’s depo seminar was a wealth of information. CCRA’s BOOT CAMP was definitely worth my time and money to be here. Networking, meeting professionals...just a great day!” – Maurice King*

*“The networking was fabulous. I was networking and just got offered my first job by one of the firm owners at CCRA’s BOOT CAMP!” – Joy Chiou*

*“Very positive experience and very valuable information. Warm atmosphere and the nicest and experienced of people.” – Kevin Kaufman*

*“The event was very well put together.” – Natalie Parvizi*

## IMPRESSIONS OF EACH SEMINAR:

### Rachel Passarella, “Stand Up and Stand Out: Marketing, Networking and More”

*“I really enjoyed Rachel’s presentation. It’s very motivating to know a new reporter has had the ability to go so far in her career already.” – Kristina Denapoli*

*“Very encouraging to us as the younger generation of students.” – Renee Rodriguez*

*“Awesome speaker. Very, very motivational.” – Shivaneer Sujata*

### Christy Cannariato, “Depos 101”

*“It went great! It was funny but serious. Loved it!” – Jessica Guardado*

*“So funny to listen to! She had a lot of very good information to pass along. I wish she could have had more time. I really enjoyed her as a speaker.” – Traci Homan*

*“Christy is very entertaining and informative. She is one of the best speakers I have listened to in three years in the profession.” – Nicholas Steckel*

### Toni O’Neill, “How to Keep your CSR License out of Jeopardy”

*“Toni is a great speaker! Nice to have an inside look at the Court Reporters Board.” – Jill McDonald*

*“Didn’t know you could check status of your license on website or that you could sign up for email notification for changes in codes and procedures.” – Stephanie Feese*

*“Scared straight! Thank you!!!” – Susan Biard*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



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# THE SOLD-OUT CROWD

By Rachel Passarella, CSR, RPR

The day was finally upon us. Christy Cannariato, the event's brilliant coordinator, likened it to a bride's wedding day. So much time and planning had gone into this one day. It was time for CCRA's BOOT CAMP!! I was fortunate enough to be able to participate in this event, as well as contribute to marketing and advertising in the months leading up to it. I was even asked to present a seminar! Little did I know when I said "yes" to that offer, that I would be standing in front of the largest group of people before whom I have ever given a presentation. As a new Board member, I have dedicated myself to doing whatever I possibly can to get involved and give back to this profession I love so much. I couldn't have asked for a better group to take this adventure with. The Board of Directors for CCRA this year is making BIG strides and I'm proud to be a part of it all.

Thanks to the amazing members of CCRA, the eager new CSRs, students, and experienced reporters alike, this was the most fun I've had so far as a member of CCRA's Board. I met some of the most amazing people at BOOT CAMP. I can't wait to see some of them join me soon as the "young faces" of the Board someday. As I've said before, none of this would have happened if I didn't step out of my comfort zone and say YES when asked to help with anything. If I can encourage any new CSRs or students to do anything in their new careers, it is to get involved, say yes to the opportunities (even when you've never done it before) because you'll find special skills you never knew you had, opportunities to make a difference and inspire others, and you'll have the time of your life! I know one thing is for sure: I CANNOT WAIT for my next sold-out crowd!

## REVIEWS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

**Saba McKinley, "What is CART and is it for you?"**

*"AMAZING!" – Tina Dolezal*

*"Saba was very motivational. I wish I had attended her 2012 CART seminar. I'll definitely attend her next one!" – Cynthia Brostrom*

*Passionate & dynamic speaker. Very informative. Super motivational!" – Lisa Barrett*

**Pat Barkley, "How to be a Top-Notch Reporter"**

*"Impressive! Loved loved the tips!" – Danielle Dzioba*

*"Very inspirational speaker, someone to look up to." – Maria Yepes*

**Laurie Miller, "Working in Court: Eliminating the Fear"**

*"Outstanding!!!" – Renee DeMenno-Zepezaer*

*"Great, useful information!" – Marisa Medina*

**Carole Browne and Phil Liberatore, CPA, "Court Reporting Dollars and {Sense/Cents/Scents}"**

*"Phil was dynamic and offered useful tax deduction tips. Carole was really funny when she gave out the prize. Everyone got really excited when looking for a Post-it under the chair."*

*"Very good information that I never thought could be written off. Very funny." – Pat Jensen*

*"Oh my! There's no way I would have known most of what Mr. Liberatore said had I not been here! So glad! Priceless!" – Ann Sheffer*

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# THROUGH SCHOOL AND BACK AGAIN; A NEW CART PROVIDER'S JOURNEY

By Christine Ahn

Back before the stress, frustration, and soul-crushing -- ahem, challenging days of court reporting school, I did something much easier: I went to a four-year university.

And I loved it. So much so, in fact, that I just wouldn't leave. I blissfully flitted from Greek Mythology to Earthquake Science to Italian and racked up almost 30 more credits than I needed to graduate. Hey, I like to be thorough. And I do find the vast majority of subjects (sorry, economics) quite interesting.

At the time, I justified this binge of academia with a dreamy "I love learning!" The older, wiser, and bitterly indebted me who is still paying for it all, thinks I might as well have just said, "I hate money!" But I digress.

The point is that as soon as I heard about CART in Theory class, I knew it was the career for me. Being able to directly help others access their education while working in an intellectually stimulating and ever-changing environment, actually using that knowledge of Greek mythology in everyday life? Sign me up!

Going through court reporting school with the goal of becoming a CART provider was not as straightforward as preparing to become a reporter. The dictation is legal in nature, the class requirements are determined by the Court Reporter's Board, and realtime is something you're only encouraged to do after a couple years in the field. CART is somewhat of an afterthought or even seen as -- gulp -- something you can resort to if you get stuck at 180.

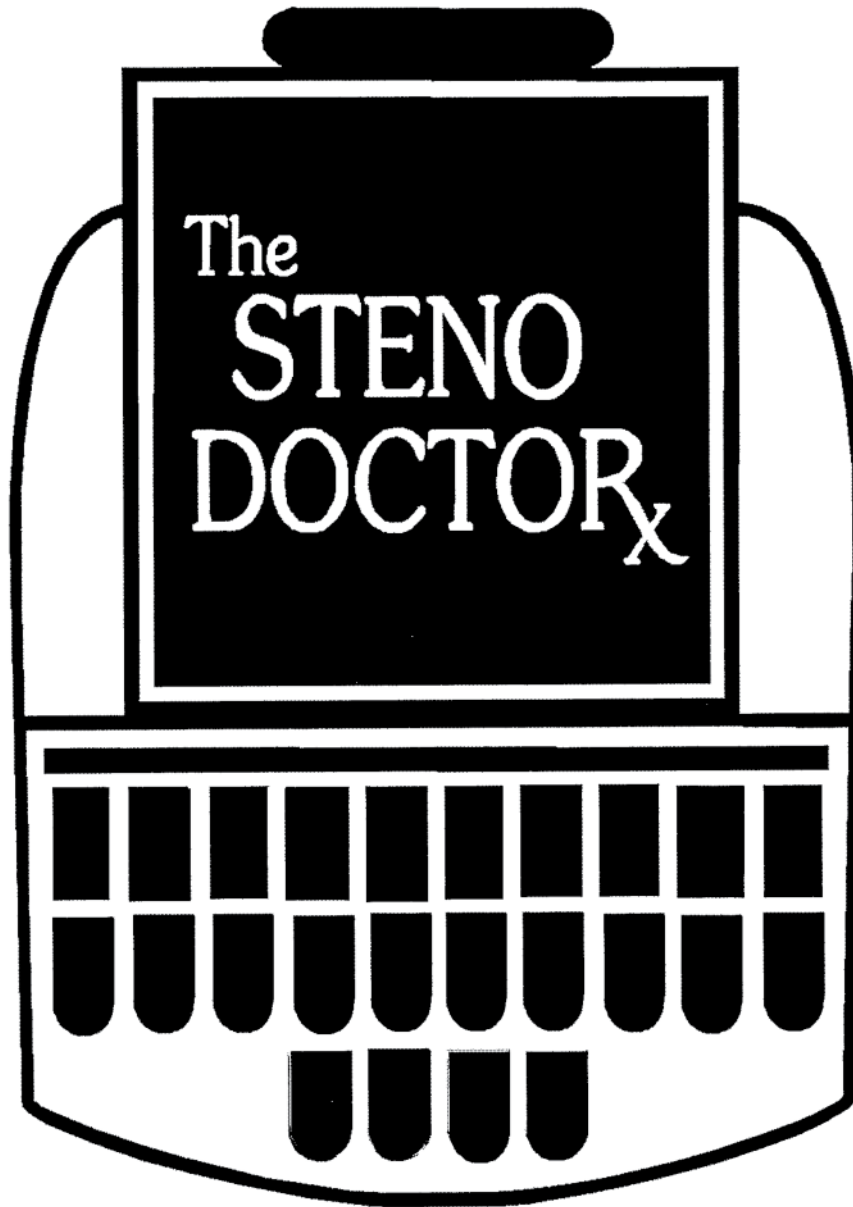
My teachers gave me some great suggestions on how to prepare myself for CART, but without the formal instruction and guidance provided in my court reporting classes, I was often left to my own devices and made some mistakes along the way. Fortunately, I did find a fantastic CART class at a different school late in my education, and I highly recommend taking one if you can, but I think classes like these are all too rare.

In my most productive summer ever, I finished school in June 2013, passed the July CSR, and started working in August. Since I know not all students have access to CART training, I would like to share my Top 10 tips -- both the things I did and wish I had done -- to prepare for CART work straight out of school.

- 1. Clean up your realtime.** Get used to punctuating while you write, resolve your conflicts, and practice your numbers for those math classes. Do not neglect accuracy; remember, you shouldn't be doing much editing when doing CART. Push for speed as well, but keep it balanced. While I think low- and mid-speed students should be working on fixing fingering problems, I see no problem with high-speed students defining mistrokes if they don't conflict with anything. I have 30 entries just for INSTRUCTOR, and my eternally dragging right ring finger would destroy my realtime if I didn't define, for example, "SAPBLD" as "sand."
- 2. Become a fingerspelling champ.** This is the No. 1 thing I wish I had worked on more, and I still have not achieved champ status. I used to sit in trail-speed classes and fingerspell random words.
- 3. Sit out.** This is invaluable. I actually still sit out with experienced CART providers and always pick up new and brilliant tips. Just figuring out where to sit can be challenging in this job, not to mention what you should do if, say, the professor turns on an uncaptioned video or speaks in another language. I jot down questions during class, and the CART provider is always happy to talk afterwards.
- 4. Get comfortable with other people looking at your screen.** I know it's scary at first! I was one of those "find an isolated corner and tilt your screen out of any other

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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## THROUGH SCHOOL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

human's possible line of sight" kind of student until my teacher forced me to get over that by standing behind me and staring at my realtime. Because you know what your clients will do? Uh...stare at your realtime. To practice, grab a bored family member, be the weirdo at Starbucks with all your equipment, or set up smack-dab in the middle of your lab -- no small text or screen tilting allowed.

- 5. Keep your legal briefs and software settings separate.** You don't want 25 lines per page, you don't want "Q BY MR. ATTORNEY" randomly popping up, and you don't want the word "pathos" translating as "page objection sustained." In addition to having a legal dictionary, I have two separate user IDs in my software so I can switch from CART to court reporting without adjusting my layout settings, which leads me to the inevitable...
- 6. Know. Your. Software.** You've heard it a million times, but there's a reason for that. Setting up phonetic translation and being able to manipulate your display, for example, are crucial. Two minutes before class started one day, my client asked me to change my text color, background color, and text size. It should have been simple, but there were unexpected problems, such as the black background causing my include files to be invisible since they were programmed with black text. Then my headers turned on unexpectedly, causing huge jumps in my display. It was just a mess. That day still haunts my dreams.
- 7. Get a mentor.** Or get two, as I did. I've bothered these wonderful, patient women with panicky questions on

such topics as wardrobe, taxes, salary negotiation, and even wedding reception locations. (Hey, these are classy ladies. And obviously, we became friends. I would not suggest beginning your relationship with wedding-related questions, but consider yourself lucky if it ever does go there.)

- 8. Read up on CART ethics and guidelines.** You know all those lovely codes you're responsible for knowing as a CSR? There's a whole different set of rules for CART, and issues such as confidentiality and client sensitivity are a big deal. NCRA's Web site is a good place to start.
- 9. Get your CSR license.** No, it's not necessary, and I know some phenomenal writers without one. But it helps to get your foot in the door, gives you more options -- especially during school breaks when jobs are scarce -- and you're covered if employers ever decide to start requiring it. Plus, someone usually wants to throw you a party.
- 10. Build your dictionary like crazy and know it well.** I know reporters who started taking depositions with fewer than 20,000 entries, but I don't think that would work in CART. That being said, prefixes and suffixes are imperative and allow you to create significantly more words than entries, so it's not as hard as it may seem to have a functional dictionary. I practice to anything I can get my hands on -- newspapers, books, magazines, podcasts, my little sister's textbooks and lists of names. This will help you get used to writing unfamiliar words. You know what I've never written on the job? "Beyond a reasonable doubt." You know what I have written? "Ethylenediaminetetraacetate."

## Wheat-Free Persimmon Muffins

Adapted by Gerie Bunch from  
*The Wheat Belly Cookbook* by William Davis, MD

- 1 ½ c. almond meal/flour
- 1 c. chopped walnuts
- ½ c. ground flaxseeds
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 ½ tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground nutmeg
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- ½ tsp. sea salt
- 1 c. mashed ripe persimmon
- 1 tsp. dried lemon rind
- ½ c. raisins (optional)
- 2 eggs, separated
- ½ c. xylitol or ¼ tsp liquid stevia or to desired sweetness
- ½ c. sour cream or plain yogurt
- ¼ c. coconut oil, extra-light olive oil, or butter melted

¼ tsp. cream of tartar

Preheat oven to 350. Place paper liners in a 12-cup muffin pan or grease the cups.

In a small bowl, mix the baking soda with the persimmon, let stand.

In a large bowl, stir together the almond meal/flour, walnuts, flaxseeds, cinnamon, baking powder, nutmeg, cloves, salt and lemon rind; add raisins if using.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the egg yolks, xylitol or stevia, sour cream or yogurt, oil or butter.

In a large bowl, with an electric mixer on high speed, beat the egg whites and the cream of tartar until stiff peaks form. Gently fold the beaten whites into the egg mixture until combined. Fold egg mixture and persimmons into the flour mixture until well combined.

Divide the batter among the muffin cups, filling each about half full. Bake for 40 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan on a rack for 5 minutes. Remove from the pan and cool completely on a rack.

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## Default Programs

**Q. Whenever I open Internet Explorer, it asks me if I want it to be my default. Does that mean that it will be my start page?**

A. If a program is your default, it means when an action is initiated that requires the use of a third-party application (program), your default program will be the one selected. So if you click a link to a Web site in an email message, for example, if Internet Explorer is your default Web browser, it will open automatically to display the linked Web page. Your Start page, which is whatever page is displayed when you launch your browser, is designated in your browser's Settings or Preferences. It will not change if you establish Internet Explorer as your default.

**Q. I was reading an article the other day and it mentioned my "OS." If I have one, I don't know what it is or where I put it. Can you explain "OS" to us -- okay, to me. I'm probably the only person who doesn't know what it is.**

A. OS is short for "Operating System." There are lots of operating systems which allow us to actually do things with our computers. Windows is an "OS," as is Linux, Mac OS-X or iOS and Google has its Android OS. Whatever flavor you prefer, they all create the environment and command structure within which we can run programs and perhaps more importantly, play Solitaire and Free Cell. None of these life-altering activities would be possible on a computer without an OS or operating system.

**Q. Is there a way to determine if a free font is safe to download? The site is dafont.com and it has a particular font I would like to use. By the way, how does a site make money if they offer free stuff?**

A. There really isn't any way to know if something is absolutely, positively safe prior to downloading, but if a site is well known and enjoys a good reputation, chances are anything downloaded will not contain any malicious critters. If the site is unfamiliar to you, run a Google search to determine what others have to say about it, which can help you determine if a site is problematic or not. In this case, I am familiar with dafont.com and it is legitimate.

A site like dafont.com makes money by selling advertisements displayed on the site and from revenue-sharing arrangements

with font authors who contribute their fonts in hopes that visitors will find them and, in the case of paid fonts, purchase them.

**Q. I've been reading your weekly newsletter (MrModem.com) for several years now and I should have known better, but I did not follow your advice. Instead, I installed a computer "booster" program that was supposed to make my computer faster. It didn't. In fact, it made it much slower, but even worse, I can't close the program, so I can't even uninstall it. Please help.**

A. Try starting your computer in Safe Mode, then uninstall the program. Safe Mode is a diagnostic mode that allows your computer to function with a minimal number of essential programs running. To start your computer in Safe Mode, shut down the computer, then turn it on and repeatedly tap the F8 key, once every second, until you see a menu with the option to start in Safe Mode. Use your arrow keys to highlight Safe Mode, then press Enter and wait for Windows to load. Once your computer is in Start Mode, click Start and go to the Control Panel where you can uninstall the program as you normally would via Add/Remove programs. If the program still won't budge, try an industrial-strength uninstaller such as RevoUninstaller.com.

## Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites of the Month

**Little Known Facts Show** - This is a family-friendly site that features short stories and vignettes about Americana. Trivia fans can listen to a different radio story each day, plus the site includes fun facts about American presidents, inventions, silly-but-real laws, amusing town names and many other interesting tidbits. Little Known Facts is also a nationally syndicated radio show, heard on more than 500 stations. <http://tinyurl.com/MrM-Facts>

**Wonder How To** - A free, how-to video search engine and directory with an index of more than 170,000 videos. Here you will find videos on everything from how to make a mint julep, to how to survive a knife attack, to how to tie ballet pointe shoes properly. (I've tried, but I still can't get my bows straight). [www.wonderhowto.com](http://www.wonderhowto.com)

**World War II in Photos** - Originally published as a 20-part series by The Atlantic, this collection of 900 photos profiles the lives of people who served on the front lines as well as those who supported the war effort from home. You can start at the beginning with the Before the War section, then continue chronologically, section by section, through After the War. Photos that may be considered disturbingly graphic are blacked out but can be viewed by clicking them, if you wish. <http://tinyurl.com/MrM-WW2photos>

**For more information about Mr. Modem's award-winning, weekly computer-help newsletter featuring personal answers to your questions by email, visit [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com)**



# CAPTION IT FORWARD: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A CAPTIONER

By Regina DeMolive, CSR

“Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep...”

That is the disturbing sound my alarm makes at 3:30 a.m. Oh, joy. Another day of waking up before the chickens. Yay me (sarcasm)!

In the next ten minutes, I hit the bathroom, brush my teeth, and throw my hair in a pony. Run downstairs (more like crawl) to grab some coffee and breakfast. Run back upstairs (halfway-decent walk), turn my computer on, and check in to my station 10 to 15 minutes before show time. Remind me, again, why I agreed to work at this time of morning?? Oh, that’s right. I have bills to pay. Oh, and because I LOVE my job! But at this time of morning, who can love anything (haha)?

3:55 a.m. I get my station sheet ready. My station sheet has a list of all the anchor names and city names for that particular station I’m captioning. I have previously prepped for this station and just need to flip to that station sheet before the show. 4 a.m. comes; the start of a two-hour newscast from Houston, Texas. I know more about what’s happening in Houston (or other cities) than I do about the city I live in!

6 a.m. That was the longest two hours of my life (okay, not really, but it feels that way). Now, I can sort of relax. 6 to 8 a.m. I have news cuts. Usually, there will be some type of national news on like Good Morning America. About once or twice every half hour, they will cut in to local news and weather. I only caption the local news part. That is a “news cut.” So in that two-hour time frame, I’m probably captioning 15 to 20 minutes total. Each cut lasts about two to five minutes.

8 a.m. I get an hour break. Time to clean! Where do I start? The laundry is overflowing, there are no clean dishes, and the dogs are jumping on me with their puppy-dog faces, “Mommy, let us outside!” I let the dogs out, start a load of laundry, do some dishes, and possibly grab a snack and some water before my next show.

9 to 10 a.m. An hour of San Francisco news. Why does this weatherman find it necessary to mention every single city in Northern California at 300 words per minute!? Some of these names are killing me! This is where prep comes in! If there is a word/city name I’ve never heard before or don’t know, I will finger spell how it sounds and look it up on the next commercial.

10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Finally! A REAL break! Oh, right...I forgot I have laundry to fold and dishes to put away. This

is also the time I go to the store, post office or other errands I need to run. I also find time to scarf down some lunch in between. Sometimes I forget to eat and a few minutes before my next show, my stomach starts growling. SHOOT! I forgot to eat! Run back downstairs and grab something quick (usually not healthy). Then run back upstairs and quickly check my phone. My husband sends me a text that says “What’s for dinner?” SHOOT! Forgot to take something out of the freezer! Yikes! Can’t do it now, my show is about to start. 1 to 2 p.m.

2 p.m. Another hour break. What are we having for dinner? I forgot to take something out soooo...we’ll just go out! It’s easy, and after a long day, I don’t feel like cooking anyway (this is a dangerous mind-set). I’m tired. Gonna plop on the couch for a few minutes. “Tick, Tick, Tick...” Break time always flies by!

## Mind-set is hyphenated

3 to 4:30 p.m. My last show of the day. Sports! BLEHH (can you tell I love sports?! Sports anchors really do not know the concept of speaking one at a time. Then, of course, it’s my luck; I get hit with the hard names. DeMar, DeRozan (De-who De-what???). I think to myself, “I’m so tired! I can’t focus! What are they saying?? You can do this! This is your last show of the day. Hang in there!”

I finally make it through my day. My husband just got home from work. We head out to grab a quick dinner. Come home, finish chores around the house, take a shower, go outside to get some fresh air with the neighbors, and then realize it’s almost time for bed again. Oh, what a day! Time to go to bed and do it all over again tomorrow! Phew!

Let’s take a second to remember what’s important. I have a career that I absolutely love. When the alarm goes off at 3:30 a.m., I don’t want to get out of my warm cozy bed. But...I have a purpose. I have viewers depending on me for those captions! I also get to work from home in my pink robe and fuzzy socks! I have an office in my home and get to watch my fur babies cuddle at my feet all day. We sometimes take life for granted. But instead of focusing on what we don’t have, let’s appreciate and be thankful for what we do have.

This is just a small glimpse into a day in the life of a captioner (mine, specifically). Each day is different, and hours and schedules vary from company to company.

Take a moment to share the story of a day in your shoes with a friend, coworker, or someone you just met. You never know how your story will impact someone else’s happiness! Pay your story forward!



# FROM THE LEDGE...

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By James Littau  
Student Member, Support Our Students Committee

It seems a nearly impossible task that we, as court reporting students, would not feel an emotional impact when we hear doomsday predictions about the future of the profession, especially when we work so hard to gain speed, become proficient in our software, and tackle the almost endless number of academic courses required of us to become a CSR in California. We are constantly bombarded with questions such as "Do courts still use court reporters?" and "Aren't tape recorders taking over all those jobs?"

And when we read story after gut-wrenching story about court layoffs, or about the abysmally-high dropout rate for court reporting students and resulting school closures, it's natural that we would question our decision to become guardians of the record.

Allow me to talk you in off the ledge! Many states, not the least of which is California, are experiencing significant court reporter shortages due to reporter retirements and an insufficient number of new reporters entering the market. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, has analyzed growth of the profession between the years 2012 and 2022 at 10 percent. In California and other states, the number of reporter retirements is expected to increase significantly over the next several years, while others reporters either have or plan to segue into other stenography-related work such as Captioning or CART.

Advances in technology have fallen significantly short of threatening significant numbers of court reporting jobs. Some courts have spent money to install audio equipment only to later have the equipment removed and reinstate court reporters, realizing that projected cost savings were not realized, equipment had failed, and there was a bureaucratic nightmare in monitoring equipment and providing accurate written transcripts in a timely manner.

We all know that there have been court reporter layoffs throughout the state. While the layoffs are devastating news, many of those laid-off reporters have returned to

the courts. In San Francisco Superior Court, for example, all laid-off reporters have had an opportunity to return to their jobs. Some reporters decided not to take their court jobs back, however, because they had already transitioned to freelance work and realized that they like the freedom not afforded them in a courthouse setting.

Under California law, the state is required to provide a licensed court reporter in all felony proceedings. But some courts have stopped providing reporters for most civil matters. This does not, however, abrogate the need for qualified reporters in civil proceedings. Rather, some courts are now requiring civil litigants to provide their own court reporters. This creates opportunities for less-seasoned reporters to provide court work. In most (if not all) California courts, as well as federal courts, officials are required to have a minimum of four years' experience before being hired by the courts. However, I know of no law requiring this level of experience. On a practical level, any licensed California CSR can legally report in a courtroom setting. Accordingly, there is a real opportunity for newer reporters to do that work when it is arranged by attorneys or the parties to civil matters.

Meanwhile, stenography-related careers other than court reporting continue to grow, thanks to the Americans With Disabilities Act. Of course, no one should expect to walk out of court reporting school and caption the Super Bowl, but these emerging career paths will continue to provide work opportunities for those of us in school today. And with more and more working reporters moving over into captioning, it creates traditional reporting opportunities for those of us reaching for 225.

Colleges throughout the state are having a difficult time filling CART positions, and this is work that higher-speed students with a laptop and software can be doing today, since there are no licensing requirements to perform CART work.

So when you feel yourself reaching the end of your rope, don't hold a pity party for yourself, thinking that you've just invested money and years for a skill that won't get you anywhere. Rest assured, your persistence will pay off in the end.

# STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

By Candy Newland

Happy New Year! I absolutely love the feelings that come along with the New Year. It is almost as if life takes a deep, relaxing breath after the slowly building hubbub of holiday shopping, finals at school, dealing with those crazy family members that drive us insane, and making sure we make it to all 27 holiday functions on time. All year long, steam is building up like a pressure cooker. Then, all of the sudden, it's over. You get a little breather, and in that pause, you start to think about what the New Year will bring...both good and bad. This year, luckily, the breather brings feelings of hopefulness, enthusiasm, and some sense of a fresh start. All of this combined leads up to the earnest, deeply seeded belief that this year's resolutions just might stick. So this year I have chosen *Putting Myself Out There* as my New Year's resolution. Easier said than done, right?

To *Put Myself Out There*, I'm attending CCRA's BOOT CAMP, subscribed to several court reporting Facebook groups, and vowed to be present at as many seminars as I can. I want to meet CSRs, officials, captioners, and the like. I plan to tag along with anyone that will let me, even before my internships start. I'm confident that the more people I meet, the more experience I may gain through their stories, experience, and words of encouragement.

This already has me feeling more connected to the profession, and that in turn has me ultra focused on the

short-term supreme goal: **Getting Out of School and Making Money**. This increased focus gets me excited to practice, so I practice more, and I practice harder. Then, when I am done practicing harder and longer, I look back on all of it and think, "Man! I may even get out of school some time within the next century!"

Here's my point: I FULLY recognize that I stand a very strong chance of hitting a bump in the road, getting distracted, settling into a lull, and maybe even getting a little depressed at some point in time, **but the momentum works two ways!!** I started with a simple breather and a clear decision that I knew would not be easy but would definitely be good for me. It made me feel good, and I used that good feeling to build good momentum. Now I am moving forward full steam ahead. I hope with all my heart that this momentum can continue so that the inevitable bump in the road slows me down as little as possible, and progress continues.

I wish that each of you have been motivated in some way by this New Year and that you step it up a notch; even just a tiny one. Get out there. What do you have to lose?

Until next time, happy dream catching.

## PERSEVERANCE PAYS: JENNIFER ESQUIVEL

By Dina Lidis

Having gone to school in the '90s, I was very curious about how students learn court reporting online and the challenges they face. I spoke to Jennifer Esquivel, who is an online student at Sage College.

Jennifer started at Bryan College as an online student. She drove to the campus in Los Angeles every Saturday for theory and took her speed building classes and academics online. When she transferred to Sage College, she was "on ground" during the fall quarter and for academics.

I asked Jennifer what the biggest differences are between online and on-ground school. For one, she said that you are accountable only to yourself. You don't see teachers or other students in person on a regular basis to give you advice or to guide you. You are able to E-mail and text your teachers with questions, but there's a time lapse between sending that communication and getting a response.

Online students create their own practice schedule. If they have full-time jobs and/or children, this is very beneficial. Students need to set aside the time to practice and to speak to their teachers who have differing hours of availability.

It is easy to get distracted. One way Jennifer keeps her focus is by leaving her writer set up all the time in her own designated space. She says it's important to start your practice session with a positive mind-set and to always remind yourself of your goal. She surrounds herself with people that she'll work with in the future and keeps an open dialogue with them. Some ways Jennifer does this are by volunteering at Vista court in San Diego County in the family law department or sitting out with other reporters.

Going to court reporting school is challenging for everyone, but Jennifer has had a really rocky road on her journey. She is a single mother who was working full time. She had many other obstacles along the way, but in 2012 she was diagnosed with cancer. Now that she's completed her treatment, she is back in school and is two tests away from qualifying to take the CSR. She has passed part of her RPR already. It will be an honor to have her in our great profession.

# FOLLOW-UP TO MY PERSPECTIVE ON THE CSR TEST. DID I PASS?

By Jesse Pickelsimer

Last month I wrote an article titled "A Student's Perspective on the CSR Test." I wrote about how I had been to the CSR exam numerous times and my struggles along the way. I also wrote about how I had fallen into complacency mode with the idea of "Oh, don't worry about it. You'll get the next one."

Another thing I wrote about was what I did differently this time around getting ready for the November 15, 2013 exam. I also wrote about how great this exam was for me and how excited I was because I knew that I just passed this test. I was really hoping that I wouldn't have to eat my words and go crawl in a deep hole somewhere.

Well, I won't keep you in suspense. I found out the day after Christmas that I DID, in fact, pass. Not only did I pass, I only missed 16. Talk about a great Christmas present! That truly was the longest six weeks of my life waiting for those results, however.

An interesting thing happened in the six weeks that I was waiting for the test results. Even though I knew I passed the test, my mind started playing tricks with me. I started thinking, "What if I didn't put my ID number at the top of the page? What if I didn't meet the Minimum Transcript Format Standards? What if I really had a bunch of drops and didn't realize it?" I was starting to completely sabotage myself again and driving myself crazy.

Again, I am so thankful for the great support system that I have in place. A very wise man (ahem, Carlos) really was

able to bring me back to sanity when he told me "The test portion is out of your hands. You've done your job, and from what it sounds, you've done it well. Don't fret. It's up to the CRB now."

That really did save me. And it is so true! You can go all out and make sure you do everything within your control to make sure you're ready for the exam. Whether it's making sure you're going to every class every day at school or going home and practicing some more dictations, whatever it is you need to do to feel prepared is great. Once the exam is over and you go back home, though, let it go! At that point there is nothing you can do but wait. So don't fret! Just go back to your normal daily life and enjoy.

When I received my results, I was (obviously) relieved. But when I opened the envelope and saw it officially in writing, I didn't make it past the first word, which is "Congratulations!" I completely broke down. I was crying and just so excited and happy. I think I cried for the next two days and was just floating on air. Then came the realization that it was time to get a job and have some real fun!

So many people have asked me if I'm happy to be starting a new chapter in my life. Because I've been at this so long, I always say, "I'm not starting a new chapter; I'm starting a new book!" I could have given up on court reporting a long time ago...if I didn't love it so much. I'm just glad that I had the strength and the courage to persevere. Never give up on your dreams!

## CCRA THANKS THE DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS WHO MADE BOOT CAMP A SUCCESS, WHO GENEROUSLY CONTRIBUTED TIME, PRIZES, AND SCHOLARSHIPS

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