



Court Reporter

Sara Zahn



Like many high school juniors and seniors, I had no idea what I was going to do with my life, and it was getting close to crunch time. Luckily, my high school happened to be hosting career days, so I selected a couple of professions that sounded interesting, one being court reporting, and one being the Marine recruiter. I had no idea there was even a job out there like court reporting. I'm so happy I stumbled onto this career -- it was either this or the Marines, and I wouldn't have been a very good Marine! After deciding that court reporting was the thing for me, I moved to Sioux Falls and attended Stenotype Institute. There were many days that I felt like throwing in the towel. There were thousands of tears and many, many hours of tape lab; but I finally graduated and I am so thankful I stuck with it.

Court reporting has been such a fun and fulfilling occupation. I started out as a freelancer in Huron, SD. I really enjoyed being a freelancer, and I miss it sometimes. I loved travelling and meeting new people. However, after the birth of my children, I decided having benefits for my family was important; and that played a huge role in the decision to become an official reporter. In 2001, I moved my little family to Aberdeen, SD, and have been here ever since.

I've worked with some amazing judges and have learned so much from them and others. I've learned so many things through my job; things I would have never had the chance to hear, see, or experience if it had not been for court reporting. Literally, every day is a new day, a new experience, or a new obstacle that I need to learn to problem-solve and get through. I've learned things about myself. I've learned that everyone has had life experiences that make up who they are; that not everyone has had the same fortunes, or misfortunes, if you will; and that has taught me to be more understanding, patient and compassionate.

I take pride in what I do. It's a pretty awesome responsibility knowing you are the





bridge between the lower court and the appellate court. Without official court reporters, the judicial system does not work as smoothly. Judges, attorneys, and even clerks, rely on us to get an accurate record. It's not easy. It's stressful. It's worth every tear and gnashing of the teeth. I think we are magical. Ha!

Court reporting has also been very fun and rewarding. Some of the best times I've had have been in the courtroom, because, as they say, "you just can't make this stuff up." I could write a book about all the funny things that have been said over the years, as I'm sure every single court reporter could! We all need that levity.

In conclusion, I wouldn't change a thing. It's been 25 years, and I still love my job!

