

Why I Became A Court Reporter by Jess P.

I didn't go to college right out of high school. I just wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I was working as a front desk clerk at a motel in my small hometown of Maquoketa, Iowa. I'll give anyone a gift if they can pronounce that correctly on the first try! As I was sitting at home one day, I saw a commercial on TV for a court reporting college in Des Moines. It was like it was calling to me. I took down the number and called them right away. Next thing I knew, I was taking the entry exam in March and enrolled to start in September.



That was in 2008. Finally, after three and a half years of court reporting school, I graduated. I remember actually being on my way to Pierre to interview for the open official court reporting position here when my instructor called me and said, "You're done. You did it." I couldn't believe it and instantly burst into tears. It was like a dream come true – on the way to interview for my dream job and I graduated. Very surreal.

When I got to college that September and saw the machine for the very first time, I wondered what I had gotten myself into. It was a foreign object I thought I would break at any minute, but those machines are durable, let me tell you! Learning the keys came swiftly and it wasn't as intimidating as it looks. The speed, however, was the challenge. You start at a slow and steady 50 words per minute and by the time graduation comes, you're at 225. That's a difference of 175 words per minute. It seems fast, and believe me, it is, but there is something really gratifying about being able to make your fingers fly that fast while listening to the next words, hitting the right keys, and writing them all down on your machine (we call steno writing, not typing!) The brain is a wonderful thing!

So here I was, fresh out of college in May of 2012, on the way to an interview that is 650 miles away from everything I've ever known. It was the best decision I've ever made. I started with Judge DeVaney (now Justice DeVaney on the Supreme Court), then I went to Judge Barnett, and now I work for Judge Klinger. Working in the Mighty Sixth has been a very enjoyable experience. Working in South Dakota in general has been a wonderful experience. I've been here for 10 years now, and it's flown by! I also got involved with the South Dakota Court Reporters' Association and have been the secretary on the board since 2018.

Being able to help make the judicial system run smoothly is such a great feeling. You ARE the most important person in the room -- they literally cannot start without you.