

# Why I became a Court Reporter

By: Jodi S.

Unlike most court reporters, I had never heard of court reporting until after I finished my Bachelor's degree and couldn't get a job. My mom worked in a doctor's office and had people coming in for depositions and said, "What about court reporting? I hear they make pretty good money and they come in dressed to the T's!" I said, "Really?" So I looked into it.



We actually had one court reporting school in Utah! I made an appointment and went to check it out.

Although I wasn't a good typist, I was the fastest in high school at shorthand and excelled at foreign language. So after they explained how it worked and that it was machine shorthand, court reporting appealed to me, and I quickly enrolled. Theory was fun, but I was worried people were moving through theory much faster than me. My theory teacher told me not to worry because the longer you spend in theory, the faster you move through speed, which turned out to be true.

After what seemed like many long and hard years, I graduated just before the school shut down for lack of enrollment. I still needed to pass the RPR to work in Utah, so I practiced on my own and passed two legs of the RPR the first time and the third leg the second time.

I then started working as a freelance reporter in 2002. There is a lot of competition in Utah; and being the last to get hired at my firm, I just got the breadcrumbs that were left, if any were left at all, so I struggled financially. After five years of not getting anywhere, I quit my firm and enrolled in real estate school. After a week of real estate school, a friend I went to court reporting school with called and asked if I would come work in court. At that time, nobody wanted to work the long, eight-plus hours a day in court; and I said, "No way!" She talked me into coming and sitting in court with her, and it didn't seem bad at all; plus, I liked the idea of having benefits and a set salary. I started work as an official court

reporter in Salt Lake City in August 2006. It turned out this was my dream job! I worked in a pool; and we only covered third-degree felonies and up, so sometimes we didn't work at all; and we still got paid just to show up!

Utah got hit hard by the recession of 2007-08, and by 2009 all official court reporters were laid off due to budget concerns. I didn't want to go back to freelancing because I had bought a house and was single. I needed a steady income and benefits. I tried to get a "normal" job and couldn't. Literally, everyone in Utah was out of work, and the competition for any job was cutthroat. All I could get were call center jobs, which are the worst jobs on the planet! After six years of being unemployed, then under-employed, and almost losing my house, I decided it was time to go out of state. I remembered a friend of mine, Ed Midgely, who I worked with in Utah, had gotten a job in Winner, South Dakota, and really liked it. So for kicks, I got on Indeed.com during lunch hour at the call center and found an opening in Yankton. The posting was a year old, so I called Human Resources and found out the job in Yankton had been filled, but there was a position open in Aberdeen, which I applied for right away and got the job! I moved here in April of 2015 and have been here ever since. I'm not going to lie, the winters are killing me, but the people here are so nice. My judges are nice, the clerks are nice, the jailors are nice, even the people who shop at Walmart are nice! My mom saw a survey a couple months ago on the news that said South Dakota was voted No. 1 for having the nicest people and called me to ask if it was true. I told her it is true! Working here has been great, and I have an endless supply of "what happened in court today" stories because, let's face it, you just can't make this stuff up!