

COURT REPORTING AS A CAREER

By: Marie Ann Heimdal

In the middle of my senior year of high school at Washington High School, it was decided for me that court reporting would be my career.

My secretarial course teacher, who was also the football coach, Mr. Mann, always had me type up the agenda for the upcoming football games. One day he asked me what I was going to do upon graduation, a question all high school seniors get asked. And I had a plan: I wanted to be a legal secretary. Mr. Mann said, “No, you are the fastest typist in class. You should be a court reporter.” I had no idea what a court reporter was, so he was going to have someone from the Stenograph School come and talk to the whole class.

In the meantime, I went home and told my mom what Mr. Mann had planned and what he thought I should



do for a career. My mom knew exactly what court reporting was; and, in fact, as the fastest typist in her school, she had always had the dream to be a court reporter. She never did pursue court reporting; however, she signed me up right away at the Stenograph School to become a court reporter. The funny thing is, my mom signed me up before Mr. Mann could even get anyone from the school to come and explain court reporting. I guess my mom was not going to let me miss an opportunity that she felt she had missed, so I owe my mom and Mr. Mann for becoming a court reporter.

And the rest, as they say, is history; as I have been a court reporter for 37 years! First, I did court reporting in Calgary, Canada, for about a year, and then moved to South Dakota where I have been performing as a court reporter for 36 years.

I am one of the lucky ones, as with my background in piano and being a fast typist, I found court reporting natural. Learning the theory and shorthand was challenging. And court reporting is like learning another language, which I find interesting. The cases I have heard over the years are also very fascinating, and I have had the opportunity to meet so many people and learn about a variety of topics through my profession. Another opportunity is earning a good wage in the State of South Dakota along with being offered a great benefits package.

There are many challenges in the court reporting profession today, such as individuals who talk too fast or enunciate poorly for the record; hearings over the speaker phone, which makes hearing difficult, especially expert witnesses such as medical

professionals who are testifying regarding complex and detailed material; and finally, the diversity of individuals in the courtroom bringing in many different languages to be documented in the record.

I am very thankful for all the wonderful, witty people I have met through my career. There never seems to be a dull moment. I am also very thankful for the great retirement system of the State of South Dakota.