



### PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

By Jeanna Zunker, RPR

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As I write this address, I'm very thankful that our good roads held out for one extra day. Our MAVRC Board traveled from all over to attend our last Board meeting in Sartell, and we had a great turnout of very dedicated individuals who brainstormed ways to grow and improve our organization. I'd like to detail some of the things that are going on at the present time on behalf of the membership.

First, I'm proud to say our website is finally up! We have much more that we are going to do with it, but this is our basic framework. We will be meeting with the webmaster in the next couple weeks to take a deeper look at what else we would like our site to have. Please check back for additions and changes, as there is much more to come! We have greatly improved our member advertising section to make it recognizable by search engines such as Google to broaden your cyber footprint. Please take a look and consider adding your name to the list.

Additionally, it was brought to the Board's attention that our member students, as they are graduating from school, are finding it difficult to make the step up to the professional member dues while also starting their new



*Jeanna Zunker  
MAVRC President*

careers. It is my understanding that NCRA does offer a step program for students graduating to ease them up to full dues. After much discussion, the Board decided to offer reduced dues for member students for their first year after graduating. A News Flash was sent out recently with all the details.

Another exciting idea that was brought up at the last meeting was congratulating our professional members and also students on their accomplishments.

*(Continued on Page 3)*



## 2011-2012 MAVRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## 2011 END-OF-THE-YEAR TREASURER'S REPORT

Prepared by Jolene Carrow/Approved by Brenda Vanderveur

### Year-end balances in MAVRC's accounts:

#### CHECKING ACCOUNT

Beginning balance	\$ 2,658.26
Deposits	42,318.65
Misc. Deposit	
Expenses	42,590.36
Balance	\$ 2,386.55

#### SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Beginning Balance	\$ 49,110.75
Deposits	39,146.25
Earned Interest	88.37
Withdrawals (to checking)	42,318.65
Expenses	--
Balance	\$ 46,026.72

### Breakdown of Income & Expenses:

#### Administration:

Deposits	\$ --
Expenses	16,755.22

#### Fundraising:

Deposits	1,737.00
Expenses	61.73

#### Membership:

Deposits	16,263.88
Expenses	208.23

#### Spring Seminar:

Deposits	8,630.00
Expenses	2,167.45

#### Fall Seminar:

Deposits	9,274.37
Expenses	6,613.44

#### Newsletter:

Deposits	2,300.00
Expenses	128.44

#### Directory:

Deposits	--
Expenses	--

#### Certification:

Deposits	366.00
Expenses	--

#### Website:

Deposits	--
Expenses	--

#### Legislative:

Deposits	240.00
Expenses	12,600.00

#### Public Relations:

Deposits	--
Expenses	3,963.51

#### Golf Tournament:

Deposits	--
Expenses	--

#### Student Relations

Deposits	335.00
Expenses	92.34

#### Miscellaneous:

Deposits	--
Expenses	--

(Continued from Page 1)

When you get a new certification or graduate college, please share that with us so that we can send out an email announcement. We're proud of you!

Personally, I've been working hard on planning our spring seminar. Please take a moment to mark our upcoming convention on your calendar. It will be held April 21<sup>st</sup> at Anoka Technical College and will have some very exciting speakers in a range of topics. More information will be coming soon. In an effort to line up speakers that are interesting to our members, I welcome all suggestions. Please contact me any time with your great ideas.

Also, since it's never too soon to plan ahead, our annual convention will be October 5 and 6. The location is being firmed up now, so please watch the website for more details.

Lastly, I want to mention that our Board is here to really serve the membership. If you have comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any of us. We appreciate you! ■

Check out  
MAVRC's  
web site  
[www.mavrc.org](http://www.mavrc.org)

## PROFILE OF A BOARD MEMBER

By Hart Erickson

Greetings, MAVRC members!

My name is Hart Erickson, and I've been recently installed to the MAVRC Board as Director-at-Large B (Freelance) for a two-year term.

I am originally from South Dakota. That's where I grew up, went to college at Northern State University in Aberdeen, got my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, and started an accounting career in Brookings in 1973. After working for about five years in various accounting positions for a couple different CPA firms, I decided it was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, so I pursued court reporting, which is something I had considered while still in high school.

I moved to the Twin Cities and started taking classes at the Minnesota School of Business in the summer of 1978. I graduated in the fall of 1981 and started my freelancing career with Jack Brennan & Associates in January of 1982. If my math is correct, that makes January, 2012, my 30th anniversary in court reporting. In October of 1982, I was offered a position with Ray J. Lerschen & Associates, and I worked with them until January of 2002. In February of

2002, I ventured out on my own and am now the "president" of Erickson Reporting, Inc.

During my time in court reporting school, I married the love of my life, and in a few years had three great kids. Two of them are married now, but they all still live in the Twin Cities area, so is nice to have them close. No grandkids yet (just a granddog), but we're constantly reminding them we're too old not to be grandparents. They are all into their careers and trying to "stay ahead of the game."



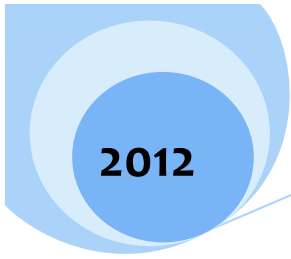
Hart Erickson

We enjoy bike riding while the weather permits and do a lot of swimming at the health club during the winter months. We also like to snowshoe when there is snow on the ground. You can find us camping at the

many state parks in our beautiful state, and we also love to travel with friends and family.

This is my second stint on the MAVRC Board. I served seven years as the treasurer back in the late '80s/early '90s when we were called MCRA. I appreciate the opportunity to be on the board again and hope to serve you well. ■

Statements of fact and opinion within this newsletter are the responsibility of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the officers or members of MAVRC. All advertisements are the sole responsibility of the advertiser alone and do not express the opinion or endorsement of MAVRC.



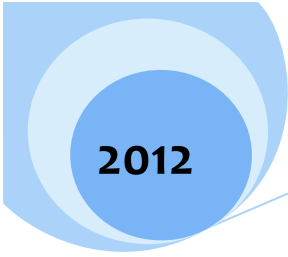
# MAVRC Spring Seminar at Anoka Technical College

## April 21, 2012

*1355 West Highway 10  
Anoka, MN 55303  
763-576-4700*

- 8:00 – 8:30 Registration
- 8:30 – 10:30 **The Impact of Digital Evidence - Mark Lanterman**  
**.2 CEU\*** Learn about the benefits and burdens imposed by electronic evidence and how information is recovered from computers, about evidence sources such as iPhone, iPad, GPS. Mark has worked on investigations including Tom Petters, Denny Hecker, Pioneer Press/Star Tribune litigation and much more.
- 10:30 – 11:00 Break
- 11:00 -12:00 **Stopping the revolving door of drunk driving! - Judge Shaun R. Floerke**  
**.1 CEU\*** Drunk driving is a scourge on our streets. Our interventions are often ineffective for repeat, chronic offenders. Prison “works” for a while at tremendous cost; and then they come back, convicted felons, still addicted and still driving. DWI Court is one of the interventions that has proven effective with this group of offenders. It’s a high accountability, treatment centered, and multi-disciplinary intervention that works by addressing the whole person, constantly assessing their recovery and treatment needs and supporting them in recovery through encouragement and swift but limited sanctions.
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch
- 1:00-2:00 **Going Paperless - Save a Tree – James Weitalla**  
**.1 CEU\*** Are you thinking of going paperless both for your steno writer as well as your office? What things should you consider? What kind of pitfalls should you be aware of? What are the benefits? Should you consider reduced paper vs. paperless? Come and join the discussion of paper vs. paperless.
- 2:00 –3:30 **Hop on Board NCRA’s TRAIN – Jeanna Zunker and Tracy Bennett**  
**.15 CEU\*** TRAIN (Taking Realtime Awareness and Innovation Nationwide) is NCRA’s newest initiative. The TRAIN program will motivate reporters to become realtime proficient. The primary aspiration of the program is to create an influx of realtime reporters, enabling the court reporting profession to remain the true technological leaders on the legal track because realtime is what sets us apart from other ways of capturing the record. Through TRAIN, NCRA hopes to assist all court reporters nationwide in becoming proficient realtime writers by overcoming the trepidations that many have related to writing realtime -- the fear, the technology, and the cost. You can do it and we will help you get there!
- 3:30 – 4:00 Break
- 4:00 – 5:30 **Echoes of War: The Combat Veteran in Criminal Court- Brockton D. Hunter, Attorney at Law**  
**.15 CEU\*** Historical evidence also shows significant spikes PTSD-related criminal activity following every major American conflict. This presentation addresses the history of the psychological wounds of war, their ties to criminal behavior and how Minnesota is leading the nation in how we deal with troubled returning veterans.

*\*.7 CEUs have been applied for and are pending approval from NCRA*



**MAVRC Spring Seminar at Anoka Technical College  
April 21, 2012**

**REGISTRATION FORM**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ OFFICIAL \_\_\_\_\_ FREELANCE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_ CERTIFICATIONS/NCRA ID# \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

All day Saturday, \$120.00..... \_\_\_\_\_

One-half day Saturday, \$70.00 (lunch not included)..... \_\_\_\_\_

Nonmember fee - \$120.00..... \_\_\_\_\_

(Nonmember fee must be paid in addition to the \$120 or \$70 if you are NOT currently a member of MAVRC)

Student or retired member, \$15.00..... \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor a student..... \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED (Payable to MAVRC)..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

Registrations must be received by Monday, April 16, 2012

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** A full refund will be made if your cancellation is received on or before April 16, 2012. If your cancellation is received after April 16, 2012, a \$75.00 administrative fee will be deducted. No refunds for no-shows.

**Questions?** Contact Jeanna Zunker at Jeannazunker@charter.net or 320-203-1409.

Mail registration form and payment to:

MAVRC  
P.O. Box 375  
Marshall, MN 56258

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## **MAVRC Mission Statement**

*The mission of the MAVRC is to promote the use of stenographic reporters to capture the record in depositions and courtrooms and to provide closed captioning and CART services.*

### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

**Lisa Blanks, Freelance Reporter  
Minneapolis, MN**

**Merilee Johnson, Official Reporter  
Minneapolis, MN**

**Shawn Kiene, Student  
Stillwater, MN**

**Staci Otterness, Student  
Ramsey, MN**

**Reid Robbins, Freelance  
Minnetonka, MN**

*Your invitation to attend!*

**MAVRC's  
Spring  
Get-together**

*March 1, 2012  
6:00 p.m. to ?*

**BLVD Kitchen & Bar**  
11544 Wayzata Bar  
Minnetonka, MN 55305  
(763) 398-3200

*Gather your peers and meet  
friends for an evening of sharing  
stories, fun, food and beverage.*

*RSVP by February 27th to:  
Myrina Kleinschmidt  
[myrina@myrina.com](mailto:myrina@myrina.com) or  
(952) 449-4884*



# \*\*\* WANTED \*\*\* BRIEFS



If you wish to continue to see  
**"Briefs, Briefs and More Briefs"**  
in MAVRC's *Minne-strokes*,  
please share your favorites!



Please submit to:  
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[jolene.carrow@gmail.com](mailto:jolene.carrow@gmail.com)



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## REPORTER RECIPES

Submitted by Brenda Vanderveur

### Mexican Corn Salad

4 cups kernel corn (2 cans)  
½ cup diced red pepper  
½ cup diced green pepper  
½ cup diced red onion  
1 cup mayonnaise  
1 or 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese  
2 cups crushed chili cheese flavored corn chips

Combine corn, peppers, onions, mayo and cheese.  
Cover and refrigerate one hour.  
Stir in crushed chips just prior to serving.

If the whole salad will not be eaten in one sitting, divide the salad before adding the chips; otherwise the chips get soggy.

Another option is to not crush the chips but to use them for dipping.



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### Dried Beef/Green Olive Cheeseball

8-oz package cream cheese  
8-oz sour cream  
1 package Hormel dried beef (chopped) (comes in a 2.5 oz resealable pouch or jar)  
½ cup shredded Colby Jack cheese  
2 tsp. dill weed  
2 tsp. minced onion (dried)  
1 tsp. seasoned salt  
1/3 cup green olive

Mix together and serve with crackers.

*Brenda Vanderveur is an official reporter in Alexandria, Minnesota, and currently serves on MAVRC's Board of Directors as treasurer.*

# CONGRATULATIONS JUDICIAL REPORTING GRADUATES



**Rebekah Brainard** graduated in November and is now working in the First District for Judge Conkel.



**Julie McCann** graduated in January and accepted a freelance position with Doby Professional Services.



**Jennifer Sharp** graduated in January and accepted a freelance position with Depo International.



**Deb Dreawves** graduated in January and is working as a freelance reporter for Braden Undeland Court Reporters.

*Support MAVRC's  
Spring Seminar  
Fundraising*

*April 21, 2012*



*Brown bags aren't just for  
lunch with boring stuff to eat..  
Purchase a "grab bag" that's  
full of neat things and treats!*

# Dear Nancy

By Nancy Varallo, RDR, CRR, FAPR

**Dear Nancy:** I have prepared myself for interactive realtime. I think I'm ready. My agency owner, however, overlooks me for those jobs. How can I convince her I'm ready? **Signed, Overlooked**

**Dear Overlooked:** You've got me humming John Fogerty's song "Centerfield":

*Oh, put me in, Coach - I'm ready to play today;*

*Put me in, Coach - I'm ready to play today;*

*Look at me, I can be Centerfield.*

A freelance office resembles a baseball team. There are the all-stars, the everyday players, and the bench -- ready to fill in at a moment's notice. Bench players need to be ready every day, even though they aren't often called on.

You've worked to get yourself ready. Great! Remind the coach you're ready, and eager to get in the game. Show her you've attended realtime seminars. Get certified: CRR. (Of course, you already have the RPR.) Ask (don't demand) for the chance to prove yourself.

By the way, how do you know you're ready? A high tran rate is excellent, but what about accuracy? Punctuation? Ability to do global defines on the fly, so your interactive realtime steadily improves as the job progresses? Do you appreciate the value of prepping for a RT job? Make sure your agency owner knows you want prep material (the complaint, answers to interrogatories, a prior transcript) to look over so you can be prepared for the job. The lawyers you work for will be favorably impressed by your conscientiousness -- and so will your boss. The best tool

for testing your readiness is a red pen. Print out a draft and proof it. How many errors per page are there? It's a great visual aid to help you highlight areas that need improvement.

As a firm owner, I look to my all-stars when I assign realtime jobs. I know they will prep for the job, their software and hardware is up to date, and they will be able to assist the attorney getting hooked up, if need be. (And, trust me, you will be looked to by the attorneys to get them set up and ready to go.) And my first-stringers have their certifications and take CE seriously. Their attitude? Always positive, confident, never whiny. They aim to please. The reporters on my bench lack one or more of these exemplary characteristics.

Talk to your firm owner; ask her how you can get off the bench. With the talent, skills, certifications, and the right can-do attitude, she'll want you in the lineup!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dear Nancy:** I'm a solid writer, but haven't provided realtime for attorneys. My firm now advertises that all its reporters are realtime-ready, on any job; the lawyers need only ask. Frankly, this scares me! You never know what a job will be like, and I'm not one to provide a service that isn't "just so". But the message from the firm owner is clear: Be ready! Can you give me some advice to help me to "be ready" every day on my job? **Signed, Not Ready for Prime Time**

**Dear Not Ready for Prime Time:** See Overlooked (above). She's looking for your job!



Nancy Varallo

Your question actually highlights a dilemma agencies face: how to compete. If the best reporters distinguish themselves from all others by their ability to do interactive RT, and fast-turnaround drafts, then we (the agency) want to advertise that that's who we are. Hire us!

We take it as an article of faith that stenographic writers are superior to all other forms of making the record (voicewriters and Stenomaskers in particular) because of our ability to provide quality realtime output. Realtime has been with us for two decades. (My husband, Ed Varallo, published his Realtime Writer's Manual in 1992.) Students learn RT in school. You can't escape the many RT seminars on offer. NCRA has RT certifications. So every stenographic reporter is realtime ready, every day, on every job. Right?

Well, maybe not. Maybe some of us have been happy to let the firm's all-stars do the RT heavy lifting while we set the bar lower for ourselves. But let me not place blame. Nevertheless, the uncomfortable truth is that too many

reporters have not upped their game to meet the standards of the topflight court reporters of today. The all-stars in my agency look forward to arriving on a job and being asked, "Can you hook up to me today?" You bet! Extra bucks per page!

How to be RT ready on short notice? First, of course, you need to write cleanly. Then all things are possible. You can make yourself a clean writer by practicing -- not for speed, but for clean execution. Practice a bit below your comfortable speed, until you can write that speed cleanly; then notch up your practice speed a bit, not more than 10 wpm. Clean writing is an acquired skill, and you can do it! Make sure you use enough briefs to cut down the many strokes you will have to write each day. Fewer strokes = fewer mistrokings = cleaner notes. Each time you work on a job in a particular subject-matter area (accident reconstruction, asbestos, banking & finance, construction, environmental), keep a discrete job dictionary containing entries, and special briefs, specific to that subject. They are then available to be looked over before any job you go on.

Ask for a prior transcript for every job you go to. Read it, and prepare your job dictionary before you get to the job. Create easy-to-write briefs for the vocabulary you see. No prior transcript? The Internet is a great place to research the case. Can't find the lawsuit? Research the company and read about its key players. What do they manufacture or sell? Look up the witness. Is he an expert? GoogleScholar.com is a great resource to find scientific articles and literature references.

I know this sounds like a lot of work, but it's what our most competent writers do. For them, preparation is part of the job - every day. You wouldn't go to bed without brushing

your teeth. Don't go to a job without preparing for it. Your notes will be cleaner, your editing time reduced - and your clients will be well satisfied. If the client is happy, your agency owner is happy. Sounds like a win-win to me.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dear Nancy:** I have been a court reporter for nine years and I am going to become an agency owner. In order to become a successful business owner, what is necessary to believe? What habits must I attain to make it in this industry? **Signed, Kaizen**

**Dear Kaizen:** You've got the answer in your name. For our readers, it is Japanese for "improvement" or "change for the better". Read about it. It's good stuff!

When you feel like you want to become an agency owner, my advice is: Lie down and wait for the feeling to pass. Just kidding! I would never say no to that ambition. Unlike an earlier Nancy whose advice was "Just say no," my advice to you is evaluate who you are. Who is this person who wishes to become a successful agency owner?

Meet Nancy No and Nancy Yes. Nancy No is in her twenties, having fun, working hard, paying the bills. She passes her RPR. In her thirties, she's Super Mom - two kids to raise, lots of pages to edit, transcripts to proof, deadlines to meet. There's no time to work on her realtime skills, or pass the RMR, no time to volunteer for her state association or mentor a student. In her forties she's a hard worker and does what her agency asks her to do - as long as it's not a LiveNote job or a quick draft transcript, and nothing too-too technical, or

anything that's going to run after 5:00 p.m. In her fifties she's struggling to keep up with the latest technology. She'd love to do CART, or run her own business, but she doesn't feel prepared for those challenges. She's tired from decades of long hours. What about a career change? Hmm. Too old for retraining. The money's too good to walk away from. Well, I'm getting close to retirement; I'll just stick it out.

Nancy Yes is in her twenties, attends seminars, practices, gets her RPR, then her RMR, and looks forward to her CRR. She builds her career and her network of reporter acquaintances throughout her thirties, in addition to taking care of her two kids. Her agency values her can-do attitude and makes sure she gets the best jobs. She pays attention to CE and is a regular at state association meetings and a regular volunteer. Her career is at a high point - she's talented, credentialed, hardworking, and she has earned the respect of her peers, her agency, and the attorneys she works for. She decides to open her own business. Now in her fifties, her business is growing; she trains new reporters, manages staff, attends owner conferences, stays abreast of technology, and keeps learning. She gives back to her profession: serving on committees, chairing committees, promoting our profession to the bench and bar; introducing technology to the lawyers she works with; promoting the highest standards of reporting to her reporters and instilling a sense of professional pride and mission in them. Now in her sixties, the Empty Nester years, she looks back with pride on her career, the business she's built, and the reporters, young and old, she has influenced. A role model. She has no regrets.

Court reporting is more than a job; it's a profession. If you make sure

*(Continued on Page 15)*

# STUDENT'S CORNER - SPEED BUILDING

By Jackie Young, RPR

While the standard dictionary definition of *plateau* is to have something remain at a stable level or on an even keel, the word plateau has a completely different meaning to court reporting students. Simply uttering the words speed plateau can cause extreme frustration and anxiety in court reporting students. Don't let that happen to you!!!

I think most of us will readily admit that one of the main obstacles all reporters will face at one time or another in their court reporting career is a lack of speed. No matter how well prepared you are, there will come a day when you meet a witness or an attorney who seems bound and determined to be forever enshrined in the Guinness Book of World Records for being the world's fastest talker. Don't let it get to you!!!

It is also true that most court reporting students will find that the other obstacle that goes hand in hand with a lack of speed, of course, is a lack of accuracy. If your fingers are struggling to capture every word, naturally your accuracy will go down. It is important to remember at times like that that it is not the end of the world, and it certainly should not stop you from fulfilling your dream of becoming a court reporter!

Another sad reality in the life of a court reporter is that there is no secret potion or magical transformation that a reporter can instantaneously undergo that will allow you to write as fast and as accurate as NCRA's speed champions. The good news is, however, that there are certain general tips you can follow to help you overcome and conquer those plateaus. With a little perseverance and hard work, you can and will be able to meet those challenges!

**Tip No. 1:** Concentrate! It almost goes without saying that concentration is perhaps one of the most important aspects of our job, and if you are suffering from poor concentration, your writing will show it. Before you begin practicing, take a few deep breaths to help you clear your mind of other thoughts and to help you relax. Do a couple of one-minute takes in the beginning until



you get warmed up and then increase those gradually until you are able to accomplish the complete five-minute take without distractions. If you start to feel frustrated at a certain speed, pause for a moment, clear your mind, reaffirm to yourself that you can write at this speed, and begin again.

**Tip No. 2:** Use one-minute takes to increase your speed and accuracy! Select a one-minute segment at a speed that you can comfortably write at without a lot of errors. Once you have finished writing that segment, read it back to yourself to see what errors you have made. Before you begin again, practice writing those words that caused you to hesitate or stumble. Then rewrite and reread the same segment at the same speed until you are able to write it flawlessly.

Once you have accomplished writing that segment without error, increase the speed slightly and begin again. This exercise will help you learn to hear and process the words at a faster rate as well as training your fingers to move at a faster speed. Your fingers can only write as fast as your ears can hear and as fast as your brain can process the information down to your fingers.

**Tip No. 3:** Perform finger exercises every day! Take the time *every day* to write the alphabet and your numbers a couple of times. You can easily do this while you are waiting for class to start or before you begin your practice takes. As you write the letter, say the letter A, B, C, and so on in your head. Finger exercises will help enforce in your

mind the placement of the key and help eliminate hesitation. It will also help develop good finger dexterity and control.

**Tip No. 4:** Know your theory! If you find that your fingers are struggling with adding the D or S or you are faltering on words that start with S-M, go back through your theory books and rewrite those exercises to help reinforce your steno theory in your mind.

**Tip No. 5:** Read back your notes! The visualization of the steno on the paper or the steno on your computer will help reinforce the correct letters/finger positions in your brain and help you recognize your errors before they become a habit. It is also very helpful to either circle your mistakes or write them on a piece of paper and then rewrite them on your steno machine a number of times correctly so your fingers learn the correct placement. This will subsequently help you stroke those words without hesitation the next time you hear them.

**Tip No. 6:** Check your body/keyboard position! Be sure you are sitting comfortably and with both feet flat on the floor. Your keyboard should be placed in a position where your forearms are either parallel or slightly parallel with the floor and your fingers are naturally resting in the home position. If you find that you are experiencing pain in the muscles of your arms, shoulders, or back, it is likely your keyboard is not positioned correctly and some adjustments need to be made to the height of your machine and/or your chair. Also, be sure your fingertips are not resting on the keys but are slightly above them. This will help avoid those unwanted extra letters being added to your writing.

**Tip No. 7:** Memorize and practice your short forms!!! While there are

mixed feelings about a reporter relying on too many short forms, probably the most important thing I have ever done as a court reporter to increase my speed and accuracy was to incorporate more short forms into my writing. I was one of those reporters who liked to write the majority of everything out, but as I aged and it felt like more and more attorneys were talking faster and faster, I made the decision to try to incorporate two to three short forms on every job. One of the ways I did this was before the beginning of my deposition, I would look at the caption and create briefs (short forms) for the names of the parties or other technical words that I thought might come up. If the plaintiff's name was, let's say, Tom Roberts, I would write that as T\*R. Or, if the defendant's name was Triumph Electronics Corporation, I would write that as T\*E (Triumph Electronics) or T\*EC for the full name. Before long, you will find yourself thinking of short forms as you write for words that are difficult to write or come up frequently.

A strong word of caution, however: Before merging any short form into your job dictionary or main dictionary, please ensure that it does not cause any conflicts! One way to avoid conflicts is to incorporate the asterisk into your short forms whenever possible.

Now that you have created all these clever short forms, the next task is to remember them and use them! This can be easily accomplished by writing them down on a piece of paper where you can easily see them during practice or on the job. You can also do this for other words or phrases that frequently come up on a practice tape or that you find yourself struggling with.

One other way I have incorporated more short forms into my writing is to listen to practice tapes and to find commonly used phrases or words that frequently come up. I then come up with a short form, write it down on a piece of paper, and then listen and rewrite that segment of the tape two to three times to help reinforce that short form in my mind. After I feel comfortable writing those short forms, I then write the entire five-minute take and strive for accuracy.

Another strong word of caution: Writing short forms should be totally automatic.

It is one thing to know you have a short form for a particular phrase, but it is a totally different thing to be able to write it without hesitation. Short forms for common phrases and words should be memorized and practiced every day until you no longer hesitate when you write them. A simple way to help you remember short forms is if they follow a similar pattern. For example, the phrases I don't know, I don't recall, I don't remember, etc., should all have the same beginning, with only the ending being slightly different. So if you are in the creative mood and want to shorten your writing, be sure to have a consistent pattern to your short forms whenever possible.

**Tip No. 8:** Have a positive attitude! If you practice regularly but you don't feel like you are making any progress, don't get discouraged. Whether you believe it or not, you are making progress - perhaps just a little more slowly than you would like. Above all else, don't dwell on your mistakes or hesitations for days on end because that will bring you down mentally and then you will fail. You can always come back a week or two down the road to work on any particular issue you may be struggling with.

**Tip No. 9:** Analyze your writing! Keep a list of hesitation words and practice them daily. Whenever a word comes up in the dictation that causes you some hesitation, jot it down on a piece of paper and practice it a few times over the course of the next few days. Once you find that you are stroking that particular word without hesitation, then move on to the next word. Repeat that exercise a few times and your mind will automatically know how to write it. It is also helpful to keep those lists and re-review them every few months to make sure you haven't forgotten how to stroke them effortlessly.

**Tip No. 10:** Make accuracy your first and most important goal! Establish a daily or weekly goal; such as, I will write 150 words per minute for five minutes with ten or less errors. By practicing your dictation in realtime, you will be able to monitor your error rate on each take. While on a deposition, I routinely challenge myself to see how low I can get my untranslate rate. Once you have your accuracy down, speed will naturally come to you!

The above is not an all-encompassing

list, but if you incorporate most of these tips into your practices, it will give you a good start on improving your writing style and help boost your speed and accuracy. If you are having difficulty fitting in much practice time, just remember that it is not how long you practice but the quality of your practice that really counts, so make it as productive as possible!

The last tip I will leave you with to help you overcome those speed plateaus is to simply RELAX and take it one step at a time so you do not feel too overwhelmed. Focus on the positive little steps that you are making rather than worrying about the next speed test that might be coming up. The person who focuses on the positive will find that they are the person who is able to challenge themselves to do their best and succeed at each stage of their career.

*Jackie Young is a freelance reporter from Delano, Minnesota, and a member of MAVRC's publication committee. ■*

*(Continued from Page 13)*

to acquire the necessary skills, you can face each challenge and succeed. Such success brings a justifiable pride of accomplishment – not a smug contentment, but the satisfaction of knowing you set goals, you worked hard to achieve them, and you succeeded. Best of all, you won't come to the last decade of your career wondering whether you'd rather be doing something else.

Nancy No and Nancy Yes are two ways of coping. Nancy No survived; Nancy Yes succeeded.

*Nancy Varallo, RDR/CRR/FAPR, is owner of Court Reporting Management Services, LLC. You can submit your Dear Nancy question at her website:*  
[www.CourtReportingMgt.com](http://www.CourtReportingMgt.com) ■

# COURT REPORTING STUDENT PROFILE

By Paula Thompson

**Name:** Paula Thompson

**School:** Anoka Technical College

**Speed:** Theory

**Hometown:** Lake Crystal, MN

**What made you decide to pursue a career in court reporting?**

The reason why I chose court reporting was because my mom's friend is a freelancer. I job shadowed her and fell in love with this program instantly. I have always loved to type and I was always the fastest one in my class in high school. I knew that this would be the career for me.

**What area of reporting interests you the most at this time—official, freelance, or captioning/CART?** The area of reporting that interests me the most at this time is freelance. The reason why I think this is because I always think about the future. I like to travel a lot and plan on having kids and I feel like being in the freelance field would give me more opportunities to travel and be with my kids a lot.

**Do you know any working reporters?** I only know two working reporters.

**If you had an hour of free time, what would you be doing (besides practicing on your steno)?** I would love to be playing volleyball. Volleyball is my favorite sport and I could play it 24/7. I also love to play the piano in my free time when I am at my home in my hometown. Otherwise, I work at Lifetime Fitness in my free time as well.

**What is your favorite band or music?** My favorite band that I like to listen to is Rascal Flatts.

**What is your favorite food or restaurant?** My favorite kind of food is Chinese.

**Where is a place you would like to visit?** I would love to fly out to Australia to see my cousin who lives there.

**Who is the celebrity you would most like to meet?** The celebrity that I would like to meet would be Jennifer Aniston.

**The last book you read?** The last book that I read was "The Best of Me."

**Favorite TV show?** My favorite TV show that I like to watch is "Two and a Half Men," but only when Charlie Sheen was on it.

**The last movie you watched?** The last movie that I watched was "The Notebook." ■



*Paula Thompson*



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**March**  
**15** MAVRC Board Meeting

**April**  
**21** MAVRC Spring Seminar  
Anoka Technical College

**October**  
**5-6** MAVRC Fall Convention

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