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THE REPORTER

A publication of AWR Court Reporting

Winter/Spring 2010

DOES YOUR COURT REPORTER MEASURE UP?



5 Videography tips for beginners

Becoming a "green" business:

How green are you?

Meet Bill



A. William Roberts, Jr., CEO



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The Reporter is a publication of
A. William Roberts, Jr. and Associates,
Court Reporting.

Court reporting wasn't your first career. Tell us how you got started.

At 16 I was involved in a traffic accident and attended a deposition. I noticed a guy in the corner and I asked the insurance representative who he was. He told me that was the court reporter. Later in high school I received information to become a court reporter, and even though it was a male-dominated field then, I thought it was too feminine.

So for three years after graduating high school, I worked as an outboard motor mechanic. I loved being on the water and I loved boats, so it was a natural fit. I later moved to south Florida because my cousin, who was a fireman there, told me about an opening in his department. I liked the schedule (24 hours on, 48 hours off) plus I was single and it allowed me to work as a mechanic on my days off.

Why the switch?

After a few years as I fireman, I had settled down and the schedule made it tough to raise a family. I decided to go to a two-year court reporting school in Jacksonville, Florida. I graduated top of my class. It was really tough for me though; I really struggled. Learning the typewriter and steno keyboards was a major challenge. We tested at 225 wpm in literary. That's championship speed!

How did you get your first job in reporting?

I decided to move back to South Carolina where I took the Official Court Reporting Exam. I was the only one who passed. Judge Baroody hired me, not because of my court reporting skills, but because of my outboard motor training. He wanted someone to work on his boat (laughing).

So is court reporting as easy as everyone thinks?

Not at all! I remember thinking how hard it was. I practiced at 280-300

wpm every day. It takes a high level of commitment and discipline to succeed in this field. I wouldn't have become a Registered Merit Reporter without that.

You had a successful career as an official court reporter. What prompted you to leave and start your own firm?

I opened the firm when the first computer-automated technology was emerging. I saw this as a huge asset to professionals in the legal field, but the first systems were expensive, around \$100,000. I took out a loan for my first equipment.

I also offered Realtime technology. My training allowed me to provide the skill and service necessary. Realtime offers a great service to the client. I think it's invaluable; it requires the highest skill set for court reporting. 25 years later, we still offer the latest in court reporting and trial presentation technologies.

Tell us about your first office.

I negotiated a 10-year lease at 54 1/2 Broad Street for around \$300 a month. Then I went to a pawn shop, bought a conference table and a file cabinet and took out a \$600 loan for chairs. I had a grand opening celebration and invited lawyers to see the new technology. They were amazed that I had a printer that printed in both directions, dot, dot, dot. A dot matrix printer. They all said, "Wow! What technology."

So business took off right away?

Not for a while. I remember when it was just me in that three-story office. I used to pace the floor waiting for the phone to ring.

But eventually business took off and you found yourself involved in tobacco litigation.

When I was working for Judge Robinson as an official court reporter in state court in Charleston, I became friends with Charles Patrick, Judge Robinson's law clerk.

Charles started the office of Blatt and Fales here in Charleston. Not long after that he became involved in tobacco litigation, and I traveled across the country with him, reporting for both sides.

Your wife Karen is a pillar in the organization. How did the two of you meet?

Karen was one of the first two beginning reporters I hired. She went to the same reporting college I did. After I hired her, I mentored Karen to achieve her Registered Professional Reporting Certification. We became friends and were married six years later.

Karen has been instrumental in managing this firm. She's a natural manager. Her ability to handle the firm allowed me to be able to travel on major cases like the tobacco litigation with Motley-Rice.

You've seen your firm grow from a one-man shop to the largest firm in South Carolina. What's next?

I'd like to see us go completely paperless, deliver everything online. E-commerce really is the wave of the future.

Any final thoughts on the past 30 years of your career?

Court reporting is a fascinating career. I've been blessed to be able to travel all over the world on different cases. Every day is like a free lecture. I've learned a lot over the past 30 years. Being a neutral party has been very rewarding. It's been an honor and a privilege to serve as the Guardian of the Record and protect the litigants during proceedings.

Bill lives in Mt. Pleasant with Karen and their two sons, Michael and Andrew. His eldest son, David, also a highly accomplished court reporter, is a partner in the firm. AWR Court Reporting currently employs 35 reporters and 15 full time staff at six offices across South Carolina and in Charlotte, NC.

5 video tips to help you shoot like a pro

So you've got a new camcorder. Now what? Whether it's your kid's soccer game, favorite concert or a family vacation, these tips from expert videographers at AWR will help you create quality videos to capture memories for a lifetime.



David Roberts, pictured above, is one of several Certified Legal Video Specialists at AWR. The camera is a Sony Digital Camera, DS-250 broadcast quality.

1. **Invest in a tripod to stabilize your image.** Use a tripod to stabilize the shots when the video is being actively shot. A tripod for personal use can be purchased for as little as \$100-\$200.

2. **Plan your shots.** You may need to arrive as early as an hour in advance to plan your shots and set up your equipment. For example, if the best location for capturing video is above or a distance from the activity, then you know you will need to use zoom and focus differently.

3. **Watch your lighting.** Backlighting is created when there's too much lighting on a background instead of a subject, creating a silhouette. Too much lighting on a subject can create a washed-out effect. The best solution is to try to limit your light sources, and then use your camcorder's white balance setting adjustment for the dominant light source. If you're indoors with lots of light streaming in the windows and bright fluorescents overhead, then either turn off the fluorescents and balance for the daylight, or pull down the window shades and adjust for the overhead lighting.

4. **Use the zoom sparingly.** The human eye doesn't move that rapidly, so it's best not to overuse the zoom on your camera. To approach subjects, zoom slowly or walk forward with the camera instead.

5. **Buy a lavalier (wireless) microphone.** The microphone on your video recorder will pick up background noise, which may be fine for a sporting event but unwanted for a family gathering. By investing in a lavalier microphone, for as little as \$50, you can pick up individual subject's voices. Store the microphones in a padded case or wrap in bubble wrap for long-term storage. Don't forget to remove the batteries for storage to avoid battery-acid leakage that could damage sensitive components.

AWR Court Reporting and AWR Trial Solutions offers a full range of videography and video editing for all of your court reporting needs. For more information or to schedule a videographer, call us at (800) 743-DEPO.

Does Your Court Reporter Measure Up?

Important considerations before hiring a reporter

A good court reporter can be a valuable asset in winning your case. With over 22,000 court reporters in the United States (US Bureau of Labor, 2008), how can you ensure that you're choosing the best reporter for your needs? Four areas to consider are: qualifications and certifications, delivery time, additional services offered and rates.

Basic Qualifications

Many people outside of the court reporting profession would be surprised to learn that all members of the National Court Reporters Association must hold an Associate's Degree

Due to the grueling nature of the program, less than 25% of students graduate.

Delivery Time

Many court reporters now offer Realtime technology, allowing proceedings to be viewed simultaneously on a computer monitor or projection screen as they are written or recorded by the reporter. When using Realtime

Today, many court reporters are "going green" allowing official transcripts to be delivered within 7-10 business days via secure website or a CD. Paper transcripts are still available by many firms and can usually be delivered

within 14 business days of the proceedings.

Additional Services

Networking - Deposition or proceeding out-of-state? You'll want the same professional, courteous, reporting services you receive in your home town. (continued on next page)

technology, your transcripts may be available within minutes after the proceedings have adjourned.

Court Reporter Certifications

All court reporters should possess a minimum of a **Registered Professional Reporter's (RPR)** Certification. This is the only nationally recognized designation establishing a reporter's competence.

Certified Realtime Reporters (CRR) have completed further testing and demonstrated a mastery over Realtime technology, displaying accurate translation on networked laptop screens, or projection screens in realtime during proceedings.

Registered Merit Reporters (RMR) are advanced level reporters with at least three years of experience, who have completed additional extensive testing and demonstrated a shorthand speed of 260 wpm at 95% accuracy.

Among the most revered in the court reporting profession are those who have achieved status as a **Registered Diplomat Reporter (RDR)**. The industry's most talented professionals, these individuals have at least six years of experience in court reporting and have completed further additional testing. There are only 350 RDRs in the world today.

A well connected reporting firm can help you by scheduling affiliate reporters across the US or around the world.

Videography - Legal videography helps to provide a judge or jury with not only the words in a transcript, but also any emotion, voice inflections, or other body language from questions posed that would not be visible to someone simply relying upon a paper transcript.

Certified Legal Video Specialists (CLVS) are available through most major court reporting firms. These specialists have completed extensive testing and training to provide you with the highest quality results.

Conference rooms: Many reporters have access to spacious conference rooms where you can meet your client. Ask your reporter what conference facilities they offer.

Trial Presentation Software: A variety of trial presentation software exists today to help you organize, present, and win your case. Some of these include: CaseView, LiveNote, Summation, Sanction, Trial Director, and Visionary.

Be sure to ask your reporter how these can help you improve your day-to-day practice.

Rates

Always ask for a quote before making your hiring decision. Due to the variety of services offered, quotes will vary between reporters. Be sure to ask about hidden service fees for services like: video synchronization, video to DVD, E-transcripts, Adobe PDF and ASCII transcripts, and online transcript-exhibit repositories.

Conclusion

Once you've selected a certified, qualified court reporter, determined the delivery method you need for your transcripts, and chosen additional software to win your case, you're well on your way to success. There may be much more to the court reporting field than you had realized, but with a little extra knowledge about your available options, you'll have a competitive edge to winning your case. If you have any questions about the information in this article, give us a call 24/7 at (800) 743-DEPO.

Videoteleconferencing (VTC):

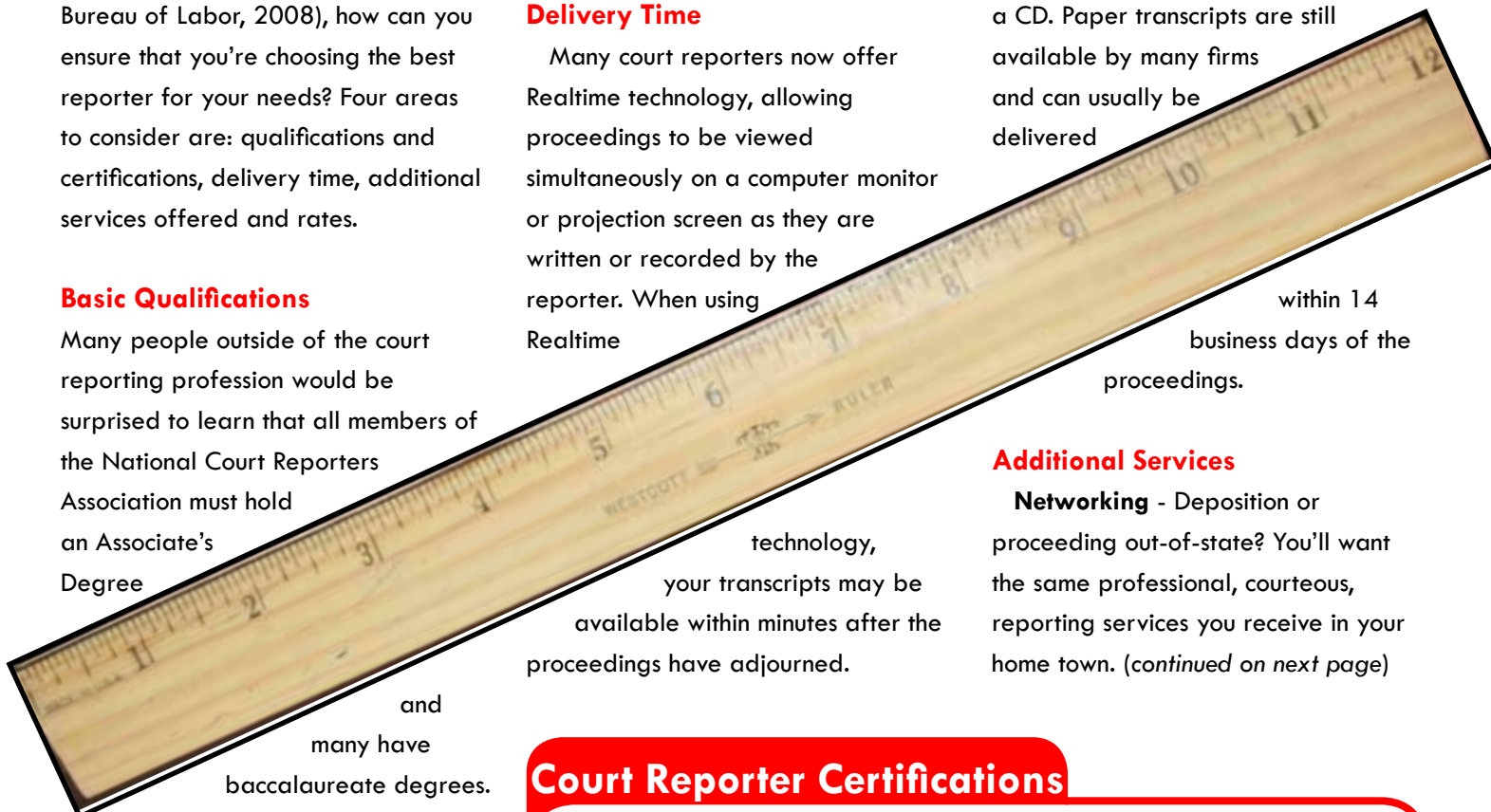
VTC is a convenient tool during the discovery process when people cannot be physically present in the same location. It provides you with the same advantages as a face-to-face meeting, allowing you to observe each other's reactions, expressions, and body language.

The main benefits of VTC are increased efficiency and cost savings. It also allows for more flexible scheduling of depositions or meetings, as you no longer have to factor in travel expenses and delays to attend.

When you schedule videoconferencing services you can conduct depositions, meetings, witness interviews, and other case-related services around the world without leaving your home town.

Make sure your court reporter or video specialist offers VTC services day or night; anywhere, anytime.

* answer to quiz on page 5: You should be able to read these short words



and many have baccalaureate degrees. While it is possible to graduate from court reporting school in 24 months, the average graduate will complete his or her training in 33 months due to the training required from advances in Realtime technology. Upon completion, each graduate must demonstrate a shorthand speed of 225 words per minute with 97.5% accuracy. In addition to shorthand or stenography, students will also take courses in civil and criminal law, English, grammar, legal and business terminology, medical and forensic terminology, business management and judicial procedures.



"We are a family owned and operated business with one principle in mind: providing you with fast, accurate and friendly services. We have been blessed to be in business for over 30 years and look forward to serving you for many more years to come."

Bill

The Roberts Family, pictured from l-r: Bill, Michael, Andrew, David, Karen, Betty, Madison, and Rachel.



It's Easy Being Green

Making a Case for Becoming a More Efficient Business

Good news, Kermit, you're not alone anymore. Today's green movement is in full swing. Research shows there are both financial and environmental benefits to being a green business.

In 2007 a Green Business Bureau (GBB) survey revealed that eight in ten consumers believe it's important to buy green brands and products from green companies.

A Conference Board survey of U.S. consumers found that the most important criterion when forming opinions about businesses is social responsibility—particularly environmental conscientiousness. Consumers think better of businesses they feel are behaving ethically.

Currently there are three primary organizations offering Green Business Certifications in the US: The Green Business Bureau (www.gbb.org), The Institute for Green Business (www.gbcertified.com), and the Green Business Alliance (www.greenbusinessalliance.com). Each organization provides experts who assist organizations in completing an extensive survey to attain their status as a green business. Surveys are completed annually. Basic certification for a medium-sized business (over 15 people) is about \$500 annually.

In 2009, AWR Court Reporting implemented environmentally friendly business measures, including offering electronic transcripts to customers. This year AWR will receive a national certification as a green business. AWR has partnered with American Forests (www.americanforests.org) to plant a tree for every deposition ordered electronically. For more information regarding our steps to becoming green or our plant-a-tree program, call us at (800) 743-DEPO.

Can a single business have that much of an impact on the environment? Absolutely. Take a look.

Research by the Alliance for Environmental Innovation has shown that one ton (40 cases of paper) of recycled fiber:

- Displaces a ton of virgin fiber used
- Reduces total energy consumption by 27%
- Reduces net greenhouse gas emissions by 47% and particulate emissions by 28%
- Reduces wastewater by 33%, solid waste by 54% and wood use by 100%

By making the switch to just 30% post-consumer copy paper...

One ton (40 cases of paper) saves:

- 7.2 trees (forty feet in height and 6 - 8 inches in diameter)
- 2,100 gallons of water
- 1,230 kw hours of electricity
- 18 pounds of air pollution

In landfills where 80% of discarded paper ends up, the decomposition of this paper generates methane, a greenhouse gas with 21 times the heat-trapping power of carbon dioxide.

How Green is Your Business?

Take this quick survey to see what your business is currently doing or can easily do to become more environmentally friendly. (Courtesy of The Bay Area Green Business Program)

Waste Reduction and Recycling

- _ Recycle cardboard, newspaper, office/mixed paper, glass, metal and plastic. Provide easy access to recycling bins.
- _ Purchase paper with at least 30% and paper towels with at least 35% post-consumer content.
- _ Eliminate use of individual water bottles and Styrofoam.
- _ Set printers and copiers to duplex.

Just the facts, please.

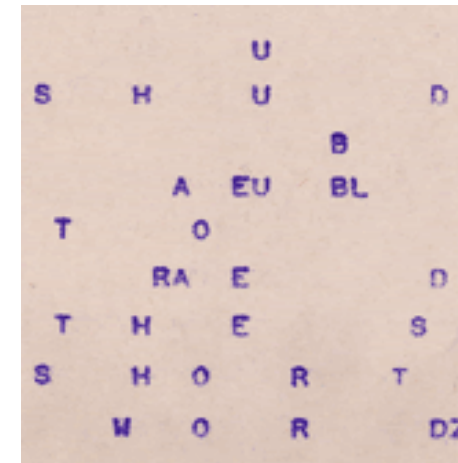
A Brief History of the Shorthand Writing Machine

The odd-looking machine pictured on the right is a key component in the success of court reporting. While shorthand writing dates back to the Roman Empire in 63 B.C., the first shorthand writing machine was not actually invented until 1830.

Early machines had ten keys which could be depressed one at a time (a letter a stroke) to create a series of dots and dashes, much like Morse code. They weighed 54 pounds!

In 1937 a more modern version of today's Stenotype® machine was developed. It had a totally depressable keyboard, allowing reporters to use a combination of letters and symbols to spell out words phonetically.

Today's machines weigh three to five pounds and cost between \$1,500 and \$5,000 each.



Try it yourself. Reading left to right can you understand the above sentence? (answer on page 7)

Say what?

Commonly misunderstood terms in court reporting

Daily copy: when the attorney gets a final transcript the same day.

Scoping: was developed when computers were introduced to the court reporting industry. The word "scopist" comes from the first computers, which utilized a diode scope screen. Scopists translate legal transcripts created on stenograph machines into plain English. The translation is usually translated with the help of computer-aided transcription software and then edited by the scopist.

Sync (short for synchronize): to ensure that the sound and text occur at the same time in a video with captioning.