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ad infinitum

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ASSOCIATION

SPECIAL EDITION

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The ILCRA Board has voted to name the annual awards luncheon at convention after ILCRA's long-time Executive Director, Nancy Davis.

The following article was written by Nancy Davis:

I was so surprised and honored to receive the news at the ILCRA Zoom Happy Hour, that the ILCRA annual awards luncheon will now be known as the Nancy C. Davis Awards Luncheon. You can just imagine what a thrill that is for me and then to have several people present recall how we met and became involved in court reporting, teaching, ILCRA and life.

President Georgia asked me to write an article for Ad Infinitum with just a little of my ILCRA history and so here goes.

I first became involved with ILCRA (then ISRA) in approximately 1985 while teaching Court Reporting at Midstate College in Peoria. I was a court reporter for 35 years prior to that and had always maintained my membership in State and National Court Reporting Associations throughout my work life. While teaching I became a member of the

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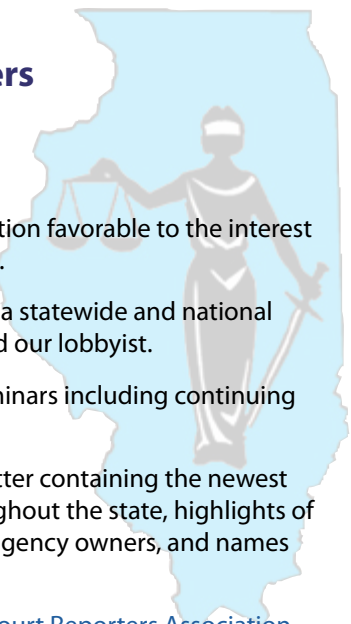
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What ILCRA Does for Illinois Reporters

- **Works** to maintain your right to be certified.
- **Monitors, promotes, and lobbies** to pass legislation favorable to the interest of court reporters, captioners and CART providers.
- **Monitors** legislation affecting our professions on a statewide and national basis through both our Legislative Committee and our lobbyist.
- **Sponsors** an annual conference and one-day seminars including continuing education and the latest in reporting technology.
- **Publishes** *Ad Infinitum*, a quarterly online newsletter containing the newest up-to-the-minute reporting developments throughout the state, highlights of board meetings, advertisements of vendors and agency owners, and names and telephone numbers of ILCRA officers.
- **Serves** as an affiliated state unit of the [National Court Reporters Association](#).
- **Offers** members significantly reduced rates for the conventions and seminars.
- **Awards** Student Scholarships, a Distinguished Service Award, an Award of Excellence for an Outstanding Educator, and conducts [speed contests](#) each year.
- **Provides** resources on the ILCRA website, including the CSR Act, Court Reporters' Act, Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Transcript Act, and ILCRA Bylaws. It also includes officers' names and contact information as well as Committees and Committee Members. ILCRA Member Information is included on the website under "Find a Reporter."
- **Offers** an Online Student Mentor Program.
- **Promotes** student recruitment.
- **Organizes** letter-writing campaigns on issues affecting our professions.
- **Sends** representative members to legislative boot camps, leadership conferences, and the national convention for training and education.
- **Provides** reporters for demonstrations on request and attends career days throughout the state.
- **Provides** free CART brochures to its members.
- **Provides** a court reporters network through Constant Contact which allows ILCRA to immediately be in touch with members via email.
- **Serves** the membership with the phone number 703-729-4861 and a [website](#).
- **Provides** an association management company to assist members.



ILCRA MISSION STATEMENT

To maintain standards of excellence in verbatim shorthand reporting, to provide continuing educational opportunities and advocate technological advancements, and to promote a spirit of mutual assistance between the profession of verbatim shorthand reporting and its consumers.

From Nancy Davis

Continued from front page

ILCRA board. My very good friend, Bonni Shuttleworth (student, coworker, and friend) urged me on and said she would help every step of the way. She did and continues to be one of my best friends to this very day and what an asset she is and has been to ILCRA.

At that time we had approximately 100-150 members in ILCRA and 2500 CSRs in the State. Since the ILCRA board consisted of volunteers, our revenue was almost entirely membership dues. So, we knew we had some work to do.

We started jazzing up our conventions and substantially increased our revenue. The Board decided we would attempt to afford a part-time executive director. I moved back to Southern Illinois so that my mother and I could live together and I could take this little "part-time" job for ILCRA as their first ever Executive Director. We



immediately started working on increasing our membership and in 1996 or so, we had around 500 members. Since I was now full-time, we were able to offer a lot of extra benefits to our members.

Keeping on top of our legislative efforts became very important. Due to technology that we had not had available to us before, we were able to offer meaningful reports to the Board and the membership.

When I first became involved with ILCRA we didn't have email communication or Internet access. We had actual face-to-face meetings every six weeks or so.

ILCRA had been discussing having an Executive Director for

several years, but never felt we could afford it. Until that time the entire board consisted of volunteers and all the work was done by them. So, we took a chance that we could increase our membership if we had a full-time person and that is what happened. So, we not only had a full-time ED, but a part-time "worker bee" as Glenda became known. For 20 years I was so honored to be involved with ILCRA. I am so grateful for all the friends I made in the process and for all the helpers and dedicated court reporters that were willing to give of their time and expertise.

When I knew it was time for me to retire, it was a tough decision.



From Nancy Davis
Continued from page 4



The committee chosen to find someone to replace me did a wonderful job in choosing Dave Wenhold. This really has been my life. My daughter, Patti Dunn Wecke, is a court reporter, has actually retired from Federal Court and is doing some freelancing now. I do some of her scoping and that keeps my finger in the court reporting pie that I so love.

Thank you so much for the honor ILCRA has bestowed upon me.

Comments from ILCRA's volunteers who have worked with Nancy

"I had the pleasure of serving on the ILCRA Board when Nancy Davis was the Executive Director. I was on the Board for 10 years, and Nancy was a godsend, especially when I was President. Thank you for all you did for the Association and thank you for your guidance and counsel when I served on the Board. Miss you, my friend."

- Jackie Timmons

"Nancy Davis, court reporter extraordinaire! Where do I start to describe the talents of Nancy Davis?"

She is one of the most consummate and decorated court reporters in the history of court reporting — official court reporter, federal court reporter, freelance court reporter, with all the certificates and letters behind her name to go with them; court reporter instructor, proof reader, Executive Director of ILCRA for more years than I can count, daughter to Mom Audrey, sister to Best Helper Glenda, and friend to all of us who have known and worked with her as a reporter and on the ILCRA Board where her fount of knowledge of all things court reporting is legendary! If any of us on the Board needed to know the answer to a question, Nancy could almost always come up with it. But best of all, Nancy is a friend to all who know her.

She is fun to be with, greets everyone with a smile on her face, and is always willing to have a good time. A very small sample of that is I seem to remember a certain slumber party at Judster's house where, after an appetini or two, we all did the time warp in our jammies as we watched Rocky Horror Picture Show! Love you, Nancy!"

- Dee Doubet

Register for the ILCRA Spring Seminar NOW

(1.0 NCRA CEUs pending approval)



While we would love to see you all in person, we understand that this spring we need to offer our seminar virtually via Zoom. That being said, we have a HUGE lineup for you at great rates.

We are having speakers from around the country who are going to be our guests and share their knowledge with you. Speakers include:

NCRA President Elect, Debbie Dibble; rock stars of the industry, Matt Moss, Kathryn Thomas, Kim Xavier, Jennifer Costales, Melissa Clagg, Georgia Long and Mike Hensley; and master motivator, Patricia Cimino.

Additionally, as part of your registration, ILCRA will be offering the required sexual harassment training that is required by the State of Illinois for you to maintain your CSR license.

Best of all, you can attend this seminar from the comfort of your home and the event will be recorded for you in case you miss one of the sessions.

Sign up now at www.ilca.org

What's Your Hobby?

By Carla Letellier

The art of court reporting requires a person with a certain level of drive, talent, or curiosity to succeed, and it is not surprising to learn that those personality traits manifest themselves as interesting hobbies and extracurricular activities.

I recently asked court reporters around the country to share their interests outside of court reporting, and the responses ranged from fascinating (such as Susie the tournament pool player) to downright astounding (Such as Tammy, who is a paranormal researcher and investigator). Some of their hobbies I had to research on Google, such as flounder gigging; in case you need to look it up, too, it's a type of fishing using a spear to catch flounders laying on the floor of shallow water.

In some instances, court reporting itself is the extracurricular activity to help support full-time hobbies. One reporter, Kristin, said, "I became a court reporter to pay for my horse habit. I have a foal due in

about a month. I do jumping. I also own a taekwondo school. I've been riding horses and doing taekwondo for about 30 years each. Court reporting is to support my hobbies and give me flexibility in schedule to do them." Patti, before becoming a court reporter, was an opera singer.

A decent number of court reporters have side gigs involving animals. A reporter named Amy trains wild mustangs, and Bonnie partakes in the practice of backyard chickening (which is one I have done too, and I apologize to my neighbors for the 5:00 am rooster crows). Jenny, who enjoys woodworking, makes miniature picnic tables for squirrels. Allison, who has a goat farm, makes goat milk soap.

It should not be a surprise that a high-skill industry like court reporting attracts some of the most amazing people.

If you have a hobby or extracurricular activity you'd like to share, let us know and we'll feature you in our next issue of Ad Infinitum!

To Interrupt Or Not To Interrupt

By Pam Taylor

Earlier this week a court reporting student asked the question on a court reporting site that I am on, and I'm paraphrasing, she wanted to know if Officials were allowed to interrupt during court proceedings. On this particular site she had seen on numerous times where freelancers had mentioned how they had interrupted, but as a trainee working with Officials, she had never encountered that situation.

Needless to say she received numerous responses, I even chimed in and it made me think about my career as both an Official and Freelancer.

Quite honestly first and foremost I think EVERYONE talks much faster than is necessary now. When I started in 1973 as a freelancer, I rarely, if at all, interrupted, and yes, as a new reporter you are nervous about everything, changing paper alone was a traumatic experience, but for some reason, I really don't believe

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To Interrupt...

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attorneys talked as fast as they do now, I remember my depo. being controlled and methodical and the lawyers were faster at telling the witness to slow down before I had a chance. Also when you are first out of school, for me, every deposition was like that five-minute test, JUST LONGER. You know how you assume the position, sit up straight, my favorite way to write was to straddle the tripod while the machine is in front of me, perfect height, hands poised and off I went.

Once I became an Official, yes, that's when things changed, and it was different, much faster, but I still don't think as fast as the last 20 years, but I do remember when I would get a back write from my old agency, my notes, literally jumped off the pages, it was like reading a printed book, my old court reporting teacher Frank Tossi would have been proud, my notes were copper plated with no shaded outlines. As an Official, I learned how to read bad notes, BUT, in defense of the working conditions as an Official, at least in my county, you were assigned to a specific division, be it Criminal, Domestic Relations, Law/Chancery, etc., you worked with the same judges, same lawyers, same lingo every single day. Honestly before the month was out you knew what everyone had to say before they said it, there was no need to interrupt, it was the same script only the name of the case changed.

Now one of the suggestions that this student received from another court reporter that court trials are more controlled, especially jury trials because you know those jurors have to understand every single word, so judges and lawyers are much more mindful of their presentation more so than because of all important record that we are keeping.

And if you REALLY want to have the picture perfect situation, take a PRESS CASE. EVERYONE is on their best behavior, those were the easiest of all trials to take. No way did you have to interrupt.

The advice I relayed was as an Official I never interrupted a lawyer in closing arguments. Closing arguments, to me, was one of the most important parts of a lawyer's case. All kinds of things are going through their head and I never wanted to interrupt their flow, their thought process, so before every closing argument, I became that newbie court reporter back in 1973, I assumed the position, sat up straight, straddled that tripod, hands poised and I was getting that argument NO MATTER WHAT, but I was not interrupting.

In the end the consensus that she received was, yes, Officials do interrupt, she just had not had the occasion to witness it.

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Cultivate & Advocate

By Samantha Brown

Advocacy: "Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy."

When I was an intern and a new reporter, admittedly advocacy didn't mean a whole lot to me. I was surrounded by veteran reporters who had longstanding relationships with judges, the local bar, paralegals and other professionals. What did I need to advocate for? They were exemplary, and I just wanted to be them someday; i.e., confident, calm and likeable. I remember job shadowing second chair in a busy felony courtroom and my paper tray fell, paper notes unraveling towards one of the younger attorneys (who is now a judge!). He laughed and helped me pick it up. I was simply mortified.

Fast forward to today. I've watched coworkers who became like family retire or transfer to different circuits. Advocacy means something different to me now. Now I am working with judges I've known for years. Now I have been "around" longer than some attorneys. Now I am walking into court, seeing a courtroom full of attorneys in a big civil case, or seeing camera crew from the local news for a criminal trial, and I'm thinking, "been there, done this."

Now I find myself thinking more about advocacy than I ever did before. I work with judges I have known for years, and it is up to me (me!?!???) to continually advocate for myself, our profession, and for the role of a stenographer, just as those reporters before me did for years.

For example, the judge assigned to the counties I work in this year is quiet, mumbles, and he often speaks about 300 plus words per minute. While frustrating, I would submit that this reinforces how important our role in capturing the record is. Can you imagine trusting some form of AI or a digital recorder to get a quiet, mumbling, 300 WPM notice of rights to a defendant in an old courtroom with horrible acoustics?

Indiscernible words, inaudible words or flat-out missing words with some form of AI are all inevitable in this very real situation. Unclear transcripts present a serious threat to due process. This is why a live court reporter is used in felony court.

We are accustomed to fading into the background as court reporters, but when it comes to the importance of our role in capturing the verbatim record, it is so important that we remain proactive. We must remain visible and available; compliant but never complacent.

Technology evolves, and we evolve with it, utilizing the tools to become ever more efficient. What sets us apart is the human element of capturing the verbatim record. This is something that cannot be replicated, and this is what we must be proactive about and advocate for. Court reporting is getting more notice than ever with social media. Let's continue that advocacy at every opportunity that presents itself. The proverbial torch has been passed to many of us. It's time to run with it!

My judge said to me the other day, "You are so much better than that recording thing." I responded, "Thank you! Yes, I agree."

Remember - YOU are the gold standard.

Breaking Records

By Kathryn Thomas

Here we go again! The Guinness World Record attempt for steno is tentatively set for NCRA's convention this year in Las Vegas. I don't have any details yet on exactly when, but I've been assured it will happen if we have an in-person convention this year.

So of course I'm in, especially since it looks like we'll have adequate transcription time, thankfully. At the Nashville attempt we only had 10 minutes to transcribe one minute of testimony, which not only didn't track with the previous record procedure, but also didn't track with current standards of contests and certification tests, which is 90 minutes to transcribe five minutes of testimony -- and that ratio is 18 minutes for one minute of testimony, not ten.

The current record is 360 words a minute, one minute of testimony, held by Mark Kislingbury. A handful of us tried to break it in 2013 at NCRA in Nashville, but unfortunately it didn't happen. Mark was just a few errors shy of passing the take though. I turned in a 370 wpm take, and got 67%, so that's something!

My practicing strategy will be much like my strategy before: practice several times a day. This time I'll think I'll try a different approach, though. Before, I started a speed take at at least 400 and slowed it down until I started getting it in spurts. This time I'll start the speed take at speed and do it over again, speeding it up each time.

We'll see in August if this strategy works.

But it's pandemically contingent, so keep socially distancing, and get vaccinated when you can, so we can see each other there!

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE! *Spread the word!*

Encourage someone you know to explore court reporting, captioning, and CART as a career. Ensuring that qualified reporters are in the field is the only way to protect the profession and to fight digital technologies from taking over our industry.

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ad infinitum

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