

THE NEXT GENERATION



ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

Jodie Carrico *Lakeshore Technical College*

Court reporting is going to be Carrico's second career, although she is also considering captioning or CART. Previously, she worked as a certified healthcare documentation specialist (or medical transcriptionist) for more than 20 years.



Bethany Morse *Mark Kislinsky Academy of Court Reporting (graduated 2022)*

Before attending court reporting school, Morse attained a bachelor's degree in oboe performance and a master's degree in architectural history and worked for several years in the fields of disability support services, architectural history, and as a client specialist for a CART agency, which is where she learned about the fields of court reporting and captioning.



Hayley Dawn Peters *Northern Alberta Institute of Technology*

Peters found out about the court reporting and captioning professions from a friend of a friend. Previously, she earned an advanced diploma in graphic design at St. Lawrence College. "I found myself missing opportunities to be creative for myself," she says, "so I switched gears after just about ten years as a graphic designer."



Claire Stein *Madison College (graduated 2021)*

Stein graduated from the University of Wisconsin (UW) with a BS in philosophy in 2013. After obtaining an undergraduate degree, she worked as a laboratory animal technician and then as an administrative assistant to vascular surgeons at the UW while working through court reporting school. She currently works as an official court reporter for Dane County, Wis.



Nicole Swanson *Plaza College*

After receiving her Bachelor of Arts in English and a paralegal certificate from Molloy College, Swanson worked as a paralegal for a law firm. It was there that she came across court reporter's invoices and transcripts and decided to pursue court reporting as a career.



Luisa Michelle Vertucci *Plaza College*

Born in America in 1975 of Italian parents, Vertucci returned with her family to Italy at the age of three and grew up there. She attended an Italian stenographer school, got the certificate, and worked in the courthouse for 20 years in Italy. When she returned to America, Vertucci began working as an Italian tutor and interpreter while attending classes for court reporting. She is now pursuing her last groups of speed tests at 180-225 wpm. Previously, she attended an NCRA A to Z® Intro to Steno Machine Shorthand program.

What will the next generation of court reporters and captioners look like? To find out, the *JCR* reached out to several recent scholarship and grant winners to learn more about their hopes and dreams for the future.

JCR | What appeals to you about court reporting and/or captioning?

MORSE | What isn't appealing about it? Each theory is its own fascinating language, and the writer is an incredibly complex and intriguing machine. As a freelancer, I get to make my own schedule and work as much or as little as I want. The pay is fantastic! I feel fulfillment from being a guardian of the record. Plus, court reporters are the coolest people on the planet!

STEIN | I'm fascinated by a variety of subjects, and the beauty of being a court reporter is that every hearing is an opportunity to learn something new. We get the chance to hear from experts of all types. No case is ever the same, and that keeps things interesting. Just within the past month, I've reported hearings on subjects ranging from a botched HVAC installation, an open records case surrounding the investigation into the 2020 presidential election in Wisconsin, a lightning-induced house fire caused by allegedly defective gas lines, and a cold-case homicide from the 1980s with new DNA evidence that helped law enforcement identify a suspect.

CARRICO | The court reporting and broadcast captioning profession appealed to me because I had the skill set of listening to people speak and creating documentation from what I heard. I have spent years proofreading, researching, looking up words, listening to thousands of healthcare stories and having the satisfaction of knowing I was part of someone's healthcare story. When I lost my job due to outsourcing, I wanted to continue using those skills and found I could do that in court reporting and/or broadcast captioning.

PETERS | Every day is different. You never really know what you're getting yourself into on a daily basis, and that's something that I find exciting. I need something that will consistently keep me on my toes and push my limits, so stenography fits perfectly with that.

VERTUCCI | Before becoming an Italian stenographer, I was told that this profession would become the job of the future. And as of today, I believe it more than ever; therefore, I am achieving this goal a second time in the U.S. in my second language.

SWANSON | The high earning potential and the ability to create your own work schedule.

JCR | Why did you think that court reporting or captioning would be a good profession for you personally?

MORSE | When I worked for the CART agency and got to know some of the best CART writers in the country, I saw how thrilled they were to work in the field. Their job satisfaction was better than any other field I had ever been involved in or observed from a distance, and that excited me. When I took the Project Steno basic training course and first got my hands on the writer, I absolutely geeked out.

After starting at the Kislinsky Academy, I was the same way! Every new theory concept excited me and still does to this day. My interest in the writer and theory combined with how important this field is — whether it be in court reporting, CART, or captioning — has brought me to the intersection of something I'm good at (with practice), something that stimulates me, and something that has an important purpose. You can't ask anything more of a career than that!

STEIN | I've always been very motivated, and court reporting is a rare career where there's always room for improvement. I appreciate that I will have opportunities to push myself throughout my career, and the sky's the limit. I historically have suffered from indecisiveness. I had trouble identifying an area I wanted to study in college, and pretty much chose the path of least resistance. I also vacillated between wanting to pursue further schooling in medicine or law, and I think that the variety of subjects I encounter as a court reporter keeps me stimulated. I chose court reporting on a whim, and I'm so grateful that I found this versatile field.

CARRICO | I want a job, but I also want a career that matters. I know that this profession matters and is needed for our justice system to work as it should.

PETERS | Court reporting/captioning fits in with my lifestyle, especially now that remote reporting is more of an option. I need to change my scenery a lot, which means a lot of moving around to experience new places, new people, and new cities. This is a profession that I know wherever I go, there will be work for me, and there's a lot of freedom in that. There's also a lot of freedom in being able to set your own work schedule.

VERTUCCI | I had a successful career as a court reporter in Italy, where I fell in love with this profession. The love is still the same, but now it's time to write in English.

SWANSON | I had always enjoyed English, and in recent years began to enjoy law so it made sense to me to combine the two into a career.

JCR | What has been the biggest challenge in your training?

MORSE | The biggest challenge I've faced since graduating is managing my expectations and my time management! It's easy to forget that everyone starts somewhere; you can't learn a new software overnight, increase your speed 20 wpm in a week, or learn how to deal with every on-the-job situation possible without encountering them along the way. Just like when I was in court reporting school, I need to focus on little improvements and experiences that lead down the path to becoming a top reporter.

STEIN | The monotony of practicing the same takes over and over gets boring. On days when I just wasn't in the mood for practice takes, I would listen to Ted Talks or true crime podcasts and try to keep up on my machine. It was also difficult for me to not

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push myself too hard. If I tried to keep up with a highly regimented practice routine, dedicating, for example, an hour to drills and briefs before beginning speed work, I would sometimes get burned out before I would get into the meat of my practice for the day. Not every day has to be a marathon. If you're not feeling it one day, try focusing on just 20 minutes of machine time, and come back later. Your writing won't feel the same every day. I promise it's not because you're not getting worse. I still have days where I can't seem to remember how to write anything, and other days the words just flow off my fingertips effortlessly. Do not let your bad days define you.

CARRICO | The biggest challenge was learning not to be too hard on myself. I had several plateaus throughout my schooling. It was difficult to stifle the negative self-talk and to keep pressing forward.

PETERS | Letting go of my own expectations of myself has been the biggest challenge so far. It's taking me longer than I had hoped to pass speed tests, and coming to terms with missing my goals and trusting that I will get there eventually has been hands down the most difficult to overcome. So, I guess, really, the biggest challenge has been myself and my impatience.

VERTUCCI | The biggest challenge has been to become fluent in English from scratch and relearn this language a third time phonetically, as we all know in this world.

SWANSON | Keeping myself on track and motivated. Self-doubt is something I have always struggled with, and it can come up during test or practice time. I had to learn how to ignore and replace self-doubt with positive thinking.

JCR | What has been the most gratifying part of your training?

MORSE | Just like when I was in school, I can see myself getting a little better with each deposition. With each passing day, I'm slightly less nervous, I speak out for the record with more confidence, I'm successfully stroking briefs that I've been drilling, or I'm able to keep up better with fast speakers.

STEIN | I like to look back at my writing a year ago and see how much I've improved. It's also extremely gratifying as a professional to file transcripts for high-profile cases that I've reported on and know that my work is the end product that courts and attorneys rely on to document what was said.

CARRICO | The most gratifying part of training has been when I have had timings that I didn't feel were worthy of spending the time proofreading them but turned them in anyway only to find out they indeed were passes!

PETERS | How do I pick one thing? I've met so many amazing people through this process. I've been able to get involved in my local association, help support my peers while simultaneously being supported by them, and engage in conversations about advocating and educating for our profession, all of which are incredibly gratifying. But truly, what can beat the feeling of finally passing a test?

VERTUCCI | The most gratifying part of my training is to have overcome the fear of not being able to learn fluent English.

SWANSON | It has been gratifying to see how far I have come from starting theory to now. It has also been very gratifying to pass any test in the program.

JCR | What motivates (or, for the two graduates, motivated) you to your end goal of graduating your court reporting and captioning program?

MORSE | It sounds cliché, but I just kept my eyes on the prize when I was in school. I had already worked in several different careers and knew that court reporting was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. On hard days when I had just failed another test, felt like I wasn't gaining speed, or thought I would never get out of school, I forced myself to focus on areas of improvement, no matter how minute: A brief I stroked with less hesitation than in the previous week, a tiny increase in a test score, or even thinking about my speed compared to the previous year when I thought I could never possibly write that fast. I experienced ups and downs like any student but

knowing that I wasn't going to allow myself any other outcome other than to succeed kept me working towards that goal.

STEIN | I really wanted to start a new career that I loved, rather than just a job that paid the bills. I felt

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pretty stuck in my career path before I enrolled in court reporting school. Completing my internship program at the Dane County Courthouse was also a huge push to the finish line. I got to meet professional reporters in my area who understood what I was going through. I learned that they too are human, and yet they can perform this incredible feat with amazing accuracy. It was helpful to have mentors who could offer tips they've learned throughout their careers and who could answer my many questions along the way. I also loved watching judges and lawyers do their thing in the courtroom, and that inspired me to become an official.

CARRICO | My family motivates me. When I went to school the first time around, I only had myself to motivate me to finish. Now that I have a family including my two teenage sons, they have seen me succeed and fail throughout this process and that pushes me to keep going when maybe it would have been easier to give up early on. They have cheered me through each passed and failed test to just keep going.

PETERS | I'm motivated by just wanting to be done my testing. I'm a good writer and a terrible tester, and I cannot wait to be done testing and out in the industry. My practicum was such a good experience, and I just want to be back out there as soon as possible.

VERTUCCI | My motivation is that I will be the first generation in my family to get a college degree at all, and I am very proud of it.

SWANSON | Whenever I need a boost of motivation I think about how good it's going to feel to get that first job offer — and to hold that first paycheck in my hand and see the financial evidence of all of my hard work.

JCR | What do you think the future of the court reporting and captioning professions looks like?

MORSE | After just attending my second NCRA Conference, I saw so much excitement from the working court reporters and the students in attendance. New technology is helping us to provide a better service, not threatening us. And can we talk about the next generation of enthusiastic and skilled up-and-coming students? The future of court reporting and captioning looks bright to me!

STEIN | I don't pretend to be a leading source on the future of court reporting, but I do know that there are jobs out there waiting for stenographers to fill them.

CARRICO | I believe it will continue to evolve just as we have seen throughout the pandemic. I do feel that with the continued efforts of NCRA and state associations promoting these professions to let everyone know that there is a great need for people to fill these positions, more people will consider these professions and go to school for training.

PETERS | The future of court reporting and captioning is bright, if we allow it to be. The profession has faded into the background, and that's slowly changing. If we can push more advocacy and education into our communities and legislation about what stenography is, how important a stenographic record is, and the importance of certification, our future will be even brighter. In terms of a short-term future, real time writing is where we can really make a push forward in our industry.

VERTUCCI | The future of the court reporting and captioning professions is very promising from the point of view of prestige, satisfaction, networking, and of course income.

SWANSON | I think that eventually all court reporters and captioners will be able to work remotely — which sounds like a glorious future to me.

I love telling people about my job, and I've met some incredible people within the past year

JCR | What do you want to tell working court reporters and captioners about yourself and your fellow students?

MORSE | To my mentors: I want to make you proud and give you the satisfaction that everything you have poured into me and my training will be multiplied and given back to the profession.

To my fellow reporters: I want to become like the best of you who have inspired me, striving to make court reporting a vital part of the judicial system.

To students: I want to inspire you, encourage you, and cheer as you become your generation's successes and leaders.

STEIN | I feel like I've really come into my own in this career. I'm not the same person I was when I enrolled in court reporting school back in June of 2019. I love telling people about my job, and I've met some incredible people within the past year. I have two young daughters, and they were a huge inspiration to me to finish school and find a more fulfilling career path.

CARRICO | It has been a rollercoaster of emotions over the last four years after my job was outsourced and I needed to start a new career after being considered at the top of my game in my previous life in medical transcription. However, I have encountered so many amazing people including instructors, official court reporters, freelance reporters, and CART and broadcast captioners who have been so willing to offer support, advice, and positive words of encouragement. This has meant so much to me, having this supportive network of people helping me and my fellow students get started in this profession.

PETERS | I had the absolute pleasure of getting to know some incredibly bright and talented individuals in my class that have entered the industry or will be entering soon. The resiliency they've shown through the last couple of years has been astonishing. We are an adaptable group.

VERTUCCI | I just want to tell working court reporters and captioners that I can't wait to get out there and make my contribution in this field.

SWANSON | I can't speak for every class and every student in the school, but I will say that myself and my fellow classmates are extremely hard workers. The majority of us are working full-time, have full schedules, and must also take care of our families/children. Even still, we are succeeding and getting closer every day to finishing court reporting school. We are determined to get out of school and start working.

JCR | Any words of advice for students?

MORSE | First, believe in yourself. You can do anything with enough tenacity and determination and grit. Don't compare your journey to others' and don't listen to anyone who is not supportive of what you want to achieve. Court reporting school is hard but so incredibly worthwhile.

Second, trust in your training. If you practice every day and give every practice session 100 percent of your focus and discipline and effort, you will gain speed and you will graduate. Take joy in each little daily improvement.

Third, seek out and maintain friends and mentors. Court reporting school is so much more fun with friends to share tribulations and successes with, and you need that support system from your peers. Mentors will encourage you, point out areas in which you can improve, and teach you what knowledge lies between graduating and starting to work.

STEIN | I remember getting stuck at 140 words per minute and thinking that it was impossible for me to write any faster. I wondered if physically and mentally I was defective and if my schooling had been a waste of time and money. Luckily, I did not quit. Each test is an opportunity. I probably failed 95 percent of the speed tests I took, but eventually I would pass a speed. For people who think, "I'm only at 160," you are so close. You are closer than you even realize. Yes, there is still work to do, but you've shown you're capable of it.

This is very tangential and probably a bit more boastful than I care to be, but before court reporting school, I ran a few ultramarathons, which were 50 miles long. I remember my first ultramarathon. Going into the race, I had no idea if I could actually run 50 miles. Before the race, I had this idea in my head that there would come a time during the race — maybe 35 miles, maybe 40 miles — where I would be "home free," where I would know in my brain, "I am going to finish." That never happened. Heck, I clearly remember being at 39 miles and thinking the race would never end, and being at 48 miles and thinking the race would never end, and being at 49.5 miles and

thinking, "Where the %&# is the finish line?!" I felt that way in court reporting school too.

Lastly, and much more practically, take your RPR legs during school. Take your Jury Charge leg as soon as you hit 200. Take your Literary leg as soon as you hit 180. First of all, it's cheaper to take the tests while you're a student; and, secondly, as a student, you are accustomed to taking tests. When you pass, that is one less thing to worry about once you're working.

If it takes a day, a week, a month, or longer, you'll pass that test you're stuck on.

CARRICO | Keep going! There are going to be good days and bad days of writing. If you quit because of a bad day, you won't get to see the good days up ahead. Celebrate the passes when they come and remember how they feel so that you keep pushing forward to the next pass that is coming. Do take the time to edit your timings because you never know if it is actually a pass! Do listen to other professionals who are on the front lines and ask questions of them. They have an abundance of information to share. Finally, do reflect on how far you have come because where you are now may have seemed impossible before, and use that for motivation to just keep going!

PETERS | Just keep going. It's the advice I still get, and it's the advice I'd pass on. You'll get there. If it takes a day, a week, a month, or longer, you'll pass that test you're stuck on. And sometimes what you really need is a day off before you try again.

VERTUCCI | I am the evidence that in life there are no limits as long as you have the right attitude and motivation in pursuing your goals. Look into yourself, and if this is what you really want, then just embrace the whole journey, putting the right effort and persistence in it, and I promise it will come at the right time, and you will be proud of yourself.

SWANSON | You will eventually finish school and you will get out there and start working. This journey will be at your own pace and no one else's. *It's not a race!*