

## CAT – It’s a wonderful thing!!!

By Karla Sommer

It was 6:30 p.m. on Friday and I was out of town enjoying an evening with my family when I received a phone call from Susan, the District Court Administrator. I contemplated letting it go to voicemail, but decided if she was calling me after hours, it must be important. The first thought that came to mind was, “What’s wrong?” My philosophy is no news is good news.

Susan proceeded to tell me she had received a panicked phone call from a local judge who needed a transcript to assist her in making a ruling, but the court reporter was unavailable to produce the transcript. She was calling me to ask if I would transcribe the notes and produce a transcript. Oh... and of course, the judge needs it as soon as possible! Oh, and one other thing... it was a full day court trial! And... no computer-generated note file is available. Needless to say, I was very reluctant to say yes, but I knew someone had to do it, and it was my professional responsibility to do what I could to help. In our discussion I discovered that the court reporter who wrote the notes graduated from the same court reporting school I did; so it was my hope our writing style would be similar.

Susan assured me she would cover my calendar to allow me the necessary time for transcript production. So Monday morning I dug out and dusted off my old note reader. For those of you who don’t know what that is, it is a machine that will advance your notes by depressing the foot pedal – a must for this situation!

I set up my machine and opened a realtime file and jumped right in. It worked well to write it in realtime as I could make changes to the file as I went along. About 15 minutes into it, I realized this was going to take longer than I anticipated. The trial took about six hours of court time, so I decided it would take about three times that amount of time to decipher and rewrite it.

In order to accurately transcribe, I found myself reading entire sentences to myself and then writing it on my machine. It was time consuming, but necessary. As was expected, there were several outlines that I was unable to transcribe, in which case I inserted a parenthetical reading: “*(Unable to transcribe.)*” The judge shared her file and her notes with me, which were a tremendous help. Since this case involved property assessments, there were many numbers involved. It took me some time to decipher the outlines, but I did learn some new briefs for numbers 13-19!

On Thursday I printed a 167-page rough draft and walked it down the hall to the judge. She was ecstatic to have the transcript and I took pride in a job well done. It was a challenge, but one I would not hesitate to accept again. From this experience I have gained a new appreciation of my Computer-Aided Transcription software and my ability to write realtime. Technology is a wonderful thing!!