

Court Reporter: The District Judge's Right-hand Man, or in Most Cases, Woman

Some people may not even notice at first – the person who quietly enters with the district judge, walks to the front of the bench, and takes a position behind a table or stand. Until, that is, an attorney needs a question or answer “read back.” Or there is a discussion of how in “real-time reporting” testimony is immediately available for review. Finally then – to the layman in any event – the vast importance of the court reporter becomes real. But for those of us in the Judiciary, we have always known that. So who are they, and how long have some of them served? You might be amazed at what we discovered.

Each district judge in Idaho hires his or her own court reporter. The court reporter becomes a state employee and works for the Court. Many have worked for the Idaho Judiciary longer than the judges they serve. In some cases the court reporter may become the fabric of continuity from judge to judge in ongoing litigation that a new judge inherits from a retiring judge. The court reporter's knowledge, skill, and insight make him or her a vital part of our system of justice. But let's face it, of the current court reporter pool, you can count the males on less than one hand!

Seven current court reporters have worked for the State of Idaho 20 years or more. Of those, we highlight four as examples of the important work they do.

The longest sitting court reporter in Idaho is **Sandra Beebe** who has worked for the State for 32 years, both in the 6th and 7th Judicial Districts. She began her service in August of 1979 in Bannock County where she was first employed by Judge George Hargraves. After his retirement, she remained in Bannock County and worked for Judge Lynn Winmill and then Judge Randy Smith. During her time in Bannock County, over 20 years, she commuted from Blackfoot to Pocatello for work. Anyone who has ever spent a winter in Eastern Idaho knows the dedication that must have taken.

In 2001, Judge James Herndon offered her his position in Bingham County in the 7th Judicial District, which she accepted. She has kept that position for over 10 years and currently reports for Judge Darren Simpson. Sandra states she believes she has worked for some of the best jurists who have served in Idaho. However, she plans to retire at the end of January, 2012, and as she puts it, “trade my office and stenotype machine for golf courses and golf clubs,” and to cruise the country with her husband on their motorcycle.

Those of us in the Judiciary can only wish her the best. From the time of using carbon paper to make the required four copies of a transcript, to computer-aided transcription, Sandra has seen all of the advances in technology the courts have enjoyed. Now we hope she enjoys her well-deserved time off, and thank her for her years of dedicated service.

Virginia Bailey has been a court reporter in the 5th Judicial District for over 28 years. As she describes it, for her it was “love at first sight” when her parents were cleaning out boxes in the attic and gave her a stenograph machine at around five years of age. That “love” has spanned a 36 year career.

Virginia began as a freelance reporter in 1975 for an agency in Santa Ana, California. In 1982 she moved to Twin Falls where she spent a year continuing as a freelance reporter until she was offered a position

with the State by Judge Phillip Becker. Judge Becker's chambers were in Gooding County, and they regularly covered Gooding, Jerome, and Lincoln counties. Again, for this court reporter, travel became part of her normal routine in working for the State Judiciary. It is no wonder that her list of "changes I've seen" includes as her "favorite" – the 75 mph speed limit. ("NOT my favorite" was people wearing pajama pants to court!)

In 1993 she went to work for Judge Roger Burdick in Twin Falls at the Twin Falls County Courthouse. In 2000 she moved with Judge Burdick to the Snake River Basin Adjudication Court until 2003 when Judge Burdick was appointed to the Supreme Court. Since that time, Virginia has been the court reporter for Judge Richard Bevan in the Twin Falls County Courthouse. She jokes that one of her funniest experiences in court was when the prosecutor (at the time, Judge Bevan), asks a very young victim to point out the perpetrator of the crime and she swiveled in her chair and pointed directly at the presiding judge, now Justice Burdick.

Married 37 years with three children and five grandkids, Virginia keeps busy away from the courthouse as well. She feels honored to be a part of Idaho's judicial system and having the opportunity to work with so many great people.

Sabrina Vasquez has been a district court reporter for 23 years. She began working for the state in April, 1989 when she was first hired by Judge Daniel Meehl in the 5th Judicial District and was chambered in Twin Falls County. She then worked for Judge John Hohnhorst. Currently she reports for Judge Randy Stoker, also in Twin Falls.

She notes that in the 5th Judicial District, court reporters cover for each other as needed. Although that may require some travel, it has given her the opportunity to work with all of the district judges within her district at one time or another. This has greatly enhanced her experience as a court reporter because each district judge has his or her own way of handling their cases.

Sabrina notes the biggest change she has seen over the years is the substantial increase in the district court's caseload. In addition, with each new district judge comes a new approach to that caseload. Court reporters must adapt to those changes with their judge. She states it has been an honor to serve her three judges.

Keith Evans has been a state court reporter in the 2nd Judicial District for approximately 20 years. He is also married to a court reporter. He was originally hired by Judge George Reinhardt, III. Upon Judge Reinhardt's retirement he worked for Judge John Bradbury. Currently he works with District Judge Michael Griffin.

All of his judges have been chambered in Grangeville at the Idaho County Courthouse. However, that particular district judge position also covers Lewis and Clearwater Counties requiring travel to Nezperce and Orofino on a regular basis. His judge may also be assigned several cases in either Latah or Nez Perce Counties. As with most Judicial Districts, in addition to traveling for cases the court reporters fill in for one another, giving Keith the opportunity to work with the other three district judges in the 2nd District.

Keith notes that the biggest change and challenge over his 20 years is writing real-time for Judge Griffin. It can be stressful and he jokes that the attorneys and witnesses seem to be speaking faster and faster as he gets older and older. One of his most rewarding opportunities he has had, however, is to take those skills

and use them outside of the courtroom. Keith has been writing real-time for a hard-of-hearing individual at his church. Without the ability to read lips, and without the knowledge of sign language, his real-time writing has allowed the lady to “hear” the church service after 73 years of sitting in silence.

Keith notes that using his legalese translating computer has only enhanced this experience. He jokes about the time the discussion concerned “pork chops” and the words “pork chop” translated into the word “pornography.” The woman just smiled and patted Keith on the leg telling him that he was still better than the “captioners” on television.

So there they are, just four examples from our hard-working, dedicated court reporter pool. Those quiet professionals who make the judges look good, the system run smoothly, and justice be delivered timely. We salute them and thank them for their many years of service.