

Reporter Spotlight - Jennifer Porto



Jennifer Porto

CSR No. 14098

Los Angeles, Santa Barbara,
and Ventura counties

How long have you been reporting?

I started school in 2003. I began CART reporting in 2007, and I got my CSR in 2016.

Where did you grow up?

Walnut, California. Fun fact, I was born in a home a block away from the house that I would later grow up in.

Tell us about your family.

My mom is still in our family home that I grew up in, and she is my best friend. My sister and her family are a few miles away. Sadly, my dad passed away in 2020. My greatest joy is how proud my dad was of me and my career as a court reporter. When I was a low-speed student my dad invented a "Paper Buddy" for me. I learned steno on a manual machine, and he would watch me look at my steno paper, type the words, flip the paper, look, type, flip the paper, and look, type, flip the paper. My dad was quite the inventor, so he made me a little machine that fed the paper to me very slowly so I could read the words and type without having to take my hands off my computer. I wish I still had my little Paper Buddy, but it makes me smile whenever I think about it.

How did you first get involved with DRA?

One of my closest friends, Cheryl Haab-Scott, volun-told me. Okay. Kidding aside, I have always been involved in mentoring and leadership throughout my career, so volunteering on the board was a natural step. She saw the potential in me, and she helped me make the leap. I am not the smartest person in the room and sometimes I feel like I lack the experience to be a leader, but that is okay because I will always work hard to find the "smart" people to get the answers when needed.

What do you like to do when you're not reporting?

Running is my therapy. I was a couch potato turned runner during COVID. I was the kid that hated running the backstops at school or doing anything that made me sweaty. I am not the athletic type. I remember when I bought my first pair of long-distance running shoes. I was comfortable at four miles, but I never imagined I could surpass six miles. I learned a lot about myself while running. I learned that I can push myself even when I'm in pain. I can quiet the negative thoughts. I just keep telling myself, "One foot in front of the other, just keep going." I ran my first half marathon in 2020. I am not fast,

but I've learned that I can keep going even when I don't think I can take another step...literally.

What has been the highlight of your career?

My little steno machine has taken me to places I never thought possible. From the Oscars, to the SAG Awards, jail house depositions at Men's Central Jail, to high-profile jobs that make me drive home in silence because I can't believe I was a fly on the wall.

If you could do it all over again, would you choose court reporting as a career?

Absolutely, no doubt. Are there days that wipe me out? Yes. Do I hate driving to Century City, Beverly Hills, and Santa Monica and basically anywhere on the 405? Yes. This job kills brain cells as I jokingly say after a really hard day on the record. I joke, but the joy of being a freelance reporter is that I have been able to work as hard as I want, when I want, and as little as I want. I have been able to completely take care of myself, travel, do house renovations/preservations, pay for a full-time scoping team, gosh, so many things that I never thought would be possible on my own. Yes, I have a man who is my partner in life, but I don't NEED a man to get through life. I am independent and that makes me so darn proud.

What is one professional accomplishment you'd still like to achieve?

I would like to get more certifications. I can realtime any subject with one hand tied behind my back -- haha -- but as soon as I'm in a testing situation I feel like I'm having a heart attack. I have had test anxiety since I was in middle school. I took the CSR 18 times, proving my determination, but I sometimes struggle with confidence.

What's your cocktail order?

Glass of scotch neat is my go-to. I also love a spicy margarita and chips and salsa on a hot summer day.

Do you still practice on your machine?

I do. I encourage students to practice with me. My goal is to practice for 30 minutes without a break. I try to build endurance and stamina so shorter tests feel easier.

What advice would you give to a struggling court reporting student?

Keep going! Failure is okay. Once again, I passed the CSR on my 18th try. Every single time I opened the envelope and read the results – again, and again, and again, I would allow myself to have one “boohoo” day. I would cry it out, get a greasy burrito or whatever made my cravings happy at the moment, and I gave myself grace to sit on the couch and be okay with just being a grump. BUT the next morning I was up, I was practicing again, and I was researching a different practice strategy. The negative thoughts are going to be there, but you have to learn to ignore them and keep going.

If you couldn't be a court reporter anymore, what career would you choose?

I am a lover of all old buildings. When I go on vacation, I take more pictures of buildings and homes than I do of people. I have about 1,000 pictures of old doors from my travels in Europe. I recently had the joy of preserving – not renovating, but preserving my 1926 Spanish Colonial home in Belmont Heights, Long Beach. My dream job would be historical preservation and design – or dog walker, but I would walk dogs for free.

If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?

My mom's split pea and ham soup. It may seem basic, but this is my ultimate comfort food.

Why is DRA membership important to you?

Before I was a DRA member, I was not aware of everything that the board does for you. I didn't know that the board has an attorney and lobbyist that works fiercely to protect us. He is also our biggest cheerleader, so let me tell you I'm so thankful he is in our corner. I didn't know that when you go to a student picnic, convention, or pay your annual dues, your dollars are used to protect and fight for this profession – to fight for us. I don't have a plan B job. I don't want to do anything else, so I will continue to volunteer on the board, I will continue paying my dues, and helping where I am able. I'm not ready to retire and become a dog walker.