

Spring 2004

# PGH BRIEF



Court Reporters  
Newsletter

Our 1st  
Issue!

**G**reetings and welcome to Powers, Garrison & Hughes' new quarterly newsletter, "PGH Brief". Contained within these pages, you will find a wealth of information about us, the services we provide and how they can help you, tips and tidbits for both your knowledge and entertainment, plus the latest trends and innovations in the legal field.

Since this is the first issue of PGH BRIEF, our feature article on [page 2](#) focuses on the history of Powers, Garrison & Hughes. In this article, you will gain knowledge of how we began, continually succeed and serve our clients' needs in the legal profession.

Technology plays a big role in our court reporting firm because of the litigation support it allows us to provide to you. On [page 3](#), read about what technologies are out there and how they can help you. In this issue, we have an introduction to realtime and videoconferencing. Also on [page 3](#), you can read about how numbers can cause confusion, how expert witnesses can be a stumbling block and how you can prevent a future misunderstanding.

Because Powers, Garrison & Hughes captures testimony in a transcript, we thought you might want to learn a little bit more about the qualifications of our staff. Turn to [page 4](#) of this issue for a short introduction to the reporters that transcribe the testimony and preserve the record.

For many of us, language, spoken or written, is very important in our jobs. So turn to [page 5](#) for Legal Phraseology and learn the etymology of some common legal terms. In this issue, we discuss the phrase "kangaroo court." We also want to keep you informed about the happenings in our office. [Page 5](#) has our company announcements, including the upcoming PCRA Convention.

An assortment of things can be found on [page 6](#): Read excerpts of actual testimony, learn about captioning in our Did You Know? column and enjoy a poem about court reporters.

We hope you find our newsletter both informative and enjoyable. Be sure to visit us on the web at [www.pghdepo.com](http://www.pghdepo.com).



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*Court Reporting & Video Services*

We welcome feedback on content in our newsletter. If you have any questions, comments, article ideas or tips, please feel free to contact us at [pgh@pghdepo.com](mailto:pgh@pghdepo.com) or 412-263-2088.

If you would like to subscribe to PGH Brief, please visit our online sign-up form at [www.pghdepo.com/newletter](http://www.pghdepo.com/newletter). You can also view a PDF of the current issue.



## From Humble Beginnings



### A Brief History of Linda Hughes and Powers, Garrison & Hughes

**Powers, Garrison & Hughes, Inc.** is a full-service court reporting and litigation support firm that has experienced rapid growth over the last several years. Linda D. Hughes, President, a professional stenotype reporter for 18 years, established and operates the company. “We provide a service that is good for society,” she comments. “I take personal pride in being a small business owner, employing people and helping other court reporters be successful in the career they’ve chosen.”

Ms. Hughes knows the importance of actively participating in his professional community. She is a member of the National Court Reporters Association and serves as an elected committee member on the Pennsylvania Court Reporters Association (PCRA). She also is a member of the Society of Technical Advancement of Reporting (STAR). These memberships have allowed her to keep abreast of developments in court reporting and network with others in the business.

After completing her training at the ICM School of Business, Degree in Court Reporting in 1977. Ms. Hughes aquired a position at Pappas Reporting, as a freelance reporter in 1978. In 1981, she joined Powers & Garrison. At the time, Joseph C. Garrison & Richard Powers owned the largest court reporting firm in the Western Pennsylvania area.

“I have been very fortunate, but I’ve also worked very hard, and this company has yet to reach its full potential.”

-Linda D. Hughes, President of Powers, Garrison & Hughes, Inc.

As Powers, Garrison & Hughes enters its twentieth year of business, Ms. Hughes is proud and surprised by the success the company has experienced. “I have been very fortunate, but I’ve also worked very hard, and this company has yet to reach its full potential.”

During her first ten years of reporting, she often worked over 70 hours a week and almost every weekend. Her tenacity paid off when, in 1995, she became a partner at Powers & Garrison incorporated, then becoming President of the company. In 1998, the company name was changed to Powers, Garrison & Hughes, Inc.

Since it’s beginning in 1975, the firm has quickly grown from a two-person freelance shop to a network of professional stenotype reporters, litigation support specialists, editors, videographers, typists and proofreaders. In 1992, the company moved into its present office space in downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Powers, Garrison & Hughes continues to add reporters and office staff and currently employs over 30 people.



**Our Motto**  
**Powers, Garrison & Hughes**  
**Best in quality to choose;**  
**We’ll go that extra mile,**  
**Always arrive with a smile;**  
**Depos in or out of town;**  
**We’ll be there, won’t let you down**

# Technology Notes

## KEEPING TABS ON ALL THE NEWEST ADVANCES IN THE COURT REPORTING FIELD



Virtual reality, instant translation and video phones are often portrayed as science fiction, but today's courtrooms employ much of this high-tech equipment. Two evolving technologies are making life easier for attorneys and allowing the record to be immediately accessible: Realtime and videoconferencing.

### What is Realtime?

Judges, counsel and other interested parties simply connect to the reporter's notebook during a legal proceeding to receive "live" text. The testimony is fed instantly from the court reporter, arriving directly to your notebook computer screen seconds after the testimony is given.

Realtime allows deaf or hearing-impaired people to be instantly involved in a testimony. In multi-day hearings, you can review today's transcript in preparation for tomorrow's proceedings. You can correct mishearings immediately, before they are entered into the official transcript.

### What is Videoconferencing?

Videoconferencing is virtual communication through phone lines and TV monitors. Instead of a witness being present in the courtroom, he can appear via a television feed which is on a dedicated line between two or more locations.

Videoconferencing eliminates travel costs as witnesses are part of a hearing without being physically present. You can talk to expert witnesses in California and New York without leaving the Metro area. Videoconferencing also allows you to see a person's body language and view exhibits rather than just hearing a voice.

*Be sure to check future issues of PGH Brief for more indepth descriptions of Realtime and videoconferencing.*



## Testimony Tips

### TIPS FOR ATTORNEYS TO MAKE TRANSCRIPTS ACCURATE



#### CONFUSING NUMBERS

*Jane Smith is being deposed on an automobile accident she witnessed. Upon being asked when it occurred, she replied, "Tree-thirty." How would you interpret her response?*

- A) 3:30 AM
- B) 3:30 PM
- C) March 30

In court transcripts, numbers are easily confused. It is best to be as explicit as possible when gathering information from a witness. Even if someone is not clear, you can clarify his response with follow-up questions ("Was that 3:30 AM or PM?").

**Solution:** State numbers with all modifiers, such as "Three o'clock AM" or "March thirtieth"

#### TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

*Fred Johnson, MD, is testifying about a surgery he recently performed. "I did a syringosubarachnoid shunt in this patient," he explained, "but I saw no signs of posttraumatic syringomyelia." Would you know off the top of your head how to spell these terms?*

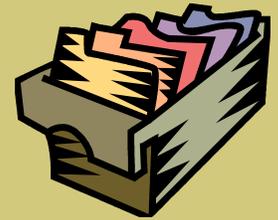
Even though court reporters have a broad general knowledge of medical, legal and technological terminology, expert witnesses will know their specialty with more detail. Since they are more familiar with the terms, experts may speak more rapidly than the stenographer would like.

**Solution:** Try to encourage witnesses to speak clearly and slowly. If possible, provide the reporter with a list of terminology that may arise in the proceeding.



## Staff Profiles

Powers, Garrison & Hughes employs a team of dedicated and experienced court reporters. We'd like to give you a brief introduction to our selected reporting staff:



**Sandy Mastay** has been a reporter at PGH since 1982, lives in the Rankin area of Pittsburgh. She received her schooling at ICM School of Business and Duff's Business Institute. She has an Associate Degree in Court Reporting. In her spare time she enjoys reading, knitting, quilting, and various crafts.

**Pam Rose** is a Realtime reporter. She and her husband, Robbie, live in Connellsville, PA. They have two sons, Ian and Evan and a daughter Olivia. She enjoys spending time with her family. Pam received her education from County Community College and has an Associate Degree in Court Reporting. Pam has been with PGH since 1982.

**Kurt Ament** is a graduate of Clarion University, graduating in 1981 with a B.S. degree in Communication and a 1984 graduate of Duff's Business Institute with an Associates Degree in Court Reporting. Mr. Ament went on to attain his Registered Professional Reporter Proficiency qualifications in 1985 while employed at Powers, Garrison & Hughes.

**Debbie Betzler** has been a court reporter for 18 years. She received her education through Duff's Business Institute and has an Associate Degree in Court Reporting. Her husband, Mark is a computer-aided draftsman. They have a son, Matthew and daughter, Alyssa.

**Ruth Ament** pursued her degree in Court Reporting at Penn-Ohio College, graduating with an Associates Degree in 1981. Mrs. Ament attained her Registered Professional Reporter Proficiency qualifications while employed at Runfola & Associates Reporting Agency in Ohio in 1982, pursuing her further endeavors in Court Reporting in 1987 at Powers, Garrison & Hughes.

**Rosemary Freeman** has been reporting for over 30 years, she received her education from the University of Pittsburgh. She also has a degree in Court Reporting, from Grace Martin Court Reporting. Rosemary has three daughters and one son and enjoys traveling and visiting her daughter in California.

**Monica Chandler** joined PGH in 1992. Before that, she went to Duff's Business Institute and received an Associate Degree of Court Reporting. She was married in June 1999 to husband, Kevin.

**Cheri Redlinger** resides in the South Hills area. She's been a court reporter for almost 10 years, receiving her reporting degree at Community College of Allegheny County and has an Associate Degree in Court Reporting. She has one daughter, Krystle. Cheri enjoys Tae-Bo, bowling, going to the theatre and church activities.

**Sonja Hall** has been reporting for almost 10 years. She received her Associate Degree in Court Reporting at Duff's Business Institute and joined PGH in 1996. Sonja was married to husband, Dustin, May 27, 2000. They have two children, Madison and Mason. She enjoys skiing, gardening, collecting dolls and attending doll classes.

**Tricia Clegg** joined PGH in 1997. She received an Associate Degree in Court Reporting the year prior. Her and her husband, Alan have one son, Blane Hunter. Tricia enjoys taking care of her newborn and cracking jokes.

**Vivian Macurak** graduated from Community College of Allegheny County in 1997 with an Associate Degree in Court Reporting. She is married to husband John; has one son, Michael. Vivian enjoys jogging, tennis, reading and traveling.

**Kathy Myers** resides just outside Natrona Heights, PA. She joined PGH in March of 1998 and went to Bradford School and obtained a Secretarial Diploma; then Point Park University, majoring in accounting then Duff's Business Institute, receiving a Degree in Court Reporting. She is married to husband, Kerry and has two sons, Devin and Korry and a daughter, Kaitlyn.

**Ronda Weinell** has been a court reporter for over 20 years, specializing in RealTime. She was an employee of PGH in 1985, leaving then returning in 1998. Ronda received an Associate Degree in Court Reporting at Duff's Business Institute. She has one son, Ryan. Ronda enjoys walking, swimming, ceramics, crocheting and sewing.

**Michelle Turner** a graduate of Duff's Business Institute, has been reporter with PGH since 2001. She and her husband, Stephen "Buddy" Hall, have one daughter, Jessica. Michelle likes listening to live bands, and gambling in Vegas.

*Legal  
Phraseology*  
THE ORIGIN OF  
COMMON LEGAL  
TERMS

In today's vernacular, a kangaroo court is a sham legal proceeding where the verdict is already known because of the bias of the court. But where did this term "kangaroo court" come from?

You may guess that the term originates from Australia, but that assumption is most likely incorrect. Although the origin of the phrase is unknown, its earliest recorded use was in the United States circa 1850, the era of the California gold rush. At this point in time, a kangaroo court was an informal tribunal that was set up to administer justice to the frontier areas where there were no formal courts. The term was later used to describe the mock courts set up by inmates to either break up the monotony or extort money from other inmates.



Stories abound regarding the origin of this phrase. One suggests that since the outcome was predictable, it referred to how the defendant would be "hopped" from the court to the gallows. Another proposes that because these courts defied the law, it made reference to an animal that seemed to defy the laws of nature in its appearance and gait.

But the most plausible origin is probably in reference to a "claim jumper," a person who wrongly seized someone's mining claim, during the California gold rush. It wouldn't be a stretch for these people to be nicknamed "kangaroos," especially since Australians were present in the United States at that time certainly bringing with them stories of these unusual creatures. And then it's just a small jump to call their courts "kangaroo courts."

## FULL STEAM AHEAD!

### A PREVIEW OF THE 2004 VIORA MEETING & CONVENTION

The 37th Annual Convention and Meeting of the Pennsylvania Court Reporters Association (PCRA) will be held April 16-18, 2004, at the Philadelphia Convention Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Among the featured guests will be Jeannie Dahnk, Esquire, President of the State Bar; and Ron Graham, the court reporter who handled the D.C. sniper shootings trial of John Mohammed. New PCRA officers will be appointed at the convention, and Mario Rodriguez will be ending his two-year term as president. For more information on the convention and the PCRA, please visit the PCRA website at [www.pcra.com](http://www.pcra.com). Be sure to check the next issue of PGH Brief for photos of the convention.



*The Philadelphia Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, site of the PCRA Convention*

A 3D graphic with the text "PGH IS NOW ONLINE!" in bold, blue, block letters with a red outline. Below the text, a hand is shown clicking a computer mouse. The entire graphic is set against a white background within a blue-bordered box.

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For even more information about our company, please visit our website where you can find information on local courts and find handy links to the related legal field. You can also schedule a deposition online and request transcripts and so much more!

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# What was That?

## ACTUAL TESTIMONY HEARD IN THE COURTROOM

Q: Trooper, when you stopped the defendant, were your red and blue lights flashing?  
 A: Yes.  
 Q: Did the defendant say anything when she got out of her car?  
 A: Yes, sir.  
 Q: What did she say?  
 A: What disco am I at?



Q: She had three children, right?  
 A: Yes.  
 Q: How many were boys?  
 A: None.  
 Q: Were there any girls?



Q: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did  
 A: No.  
 Q: Did you check for blood pressure?  
 A: No.  
 Q: Did you check for breathing?  
 A: No.  
 Q: So then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?  
 A: No.  
 Q: How can you be so sure, Doctor?  
 A: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.  
 Q: But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?  
 A: It is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere.



Q: Are you married?  
 A: No, I'm divorced.  
 Q: And what did your husband do before you divorced him?  
 A: A lot of things I didn't know about.



# DID YOU KNOW?

## THE CAPTIONING YOU SEE ON TELEVISION IS ACTUALLY DONE BY COURT REPORTERS



It is a common misconception that captions are automatically generated by a computer or that transcripts are typed up in advance and sent out as a show is broadcast. Sporting events and news shows are usually broadcast live, so a reporter needs to translate the shows in realtime. The presence of this reporter, called a stenocaptioner, creates captioning that is over 99% accurate. Broadcast captioning is one of many creative ways court reporters can utilize their machine shorthand skills outside the courtroom.

## A COURT REPORTERS' POEM

Court reporters hear such woe;  
 how they stand it, I don't know.

Tales of gore and incest too;  
 rape and murder -- nothing new.

Drinking, drugs and barroom brawls,  
 contracts, leases, "slip-and-falls."

Things that cause my hair to rise,  
 to them the story's no surprise.

Auto smash-ups, petty theft,  
 child abuse, a spouse who left.

Workers' comp and unpaid bills,  
 all about a client's ills.

To me it seems an awful chore;  
 to them, they've heard it all before.

And so they sit and take it down.  
 They don't complain; they seldom frown.

And though the witness rants and raves,  
 they merely nod and make no waves.

They're patient, calm and no one's fool;  
 how can they stay so doggone cool?

The answer's clear; it takes no sage --  
 they simply charge us by the page!

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