

# ARIZONA NOTES

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## President's Message

By Tracy Johnston

Whether you call it Corona virus or Corona or COVID or COVID-19 (new briefs for all of us), the past five months have been unprecedented, to say the least. We've had to practice patience, live with uncertainty, and find alternate ways to continue working and living while working from

home, wearing masks and distancing from others. While some people were hoarding paper products and cleaning supplies, others were actually cleaning their homes and closets (not me), spending time with those they could actually be around, and some even started cooking (OMG!). We all found something to do while waiting for stay-at-home restrictions to be lifted and stores to open.

And then came Zoom. Zoom became a household word and something we've gotten proficient with. Whether it was a professional necessity or in a personal capacity, Zoom became the way to connect for most everyone. (Zoom stock, anyone?) What we have learned during this time is that we can adapt to any situation and we are still the best resource for making an accurate record, no matter the arena we use our skills.

While hearings and depositions are being held virtually as we continue to ride the pandemic wave for who knows how long, we are right there with our clients and the courts making and producing that virtual record. They can expect and will continue to receive the best our profession has to offer...us, our skills. We adapt as needs change. Always have. Always will. That is what sets us apart and makes us more relevant and essential than before the chaos began. So, continue honing your skills and tout your abilities so others remember that we ARE the Gold Standard and anything less is unacceptable.

For those who have lost family and friends during the past months, I send my condolences. It's never easy to lose someone, and it's much harder to grieve when you cannot surround yourself with loved ones. I wish you peace.

Hang in there, everyone. This, too, shall pass. Stay well.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message	1
Educational CART During COVID-19	2
Zooming with Zoom	3
COVID and me...	4
In Memoriam: J.B. Brown	4
Midyear Article	5
Who Saved Who?	6
Extra Announcements	7
Biscotti Recipe	7



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# Educational CART During COVID-19

BY KIM PORTIK

Educational CART during COVID-19 has been quite the ride. One Friday we were in the classroom; the following Monday we were online. Unfortunately, most schools were not prepared to host classes online and began to scramble. At the time, I was working with students in the university setting. Fortunately for the students, they are much younger than I and the possibility of learning via Internet was not such a foreign concept to them.

As it became evident there were not any policies in place to put structure around the now-required online learning, life became a bit bumpy and the questions began: Can you provide captions via Zoom? Sure. Can you provide captions via WebEx? Sure. Can you caption into YouTube? Sure.

Did I know HOW to do any of those things at the time? Nope. But what are you gonna do? Students need access. And so began the learning curve for us all. I don't know if any of you tried to get help from the online platforms those last couple weeks in March, but it was pretty much nonexistent. They too were completely overwhelmed. And who in the heck ever heard of or worried about

Zoombombing??? Eesh...

For me, the most difficult part was simply getting anyone to work through issues. IT departments locked themselves away while they shored up their platforms. Instructors locked themselves away while they started recording lectures. Students started figuring out how to teach themselves since finals were only weeks away. That left no one to test. Everyone was on their own to figure out their own piece. All I can say is thank goodness for colleagues! As we each figured out a new part, we were able to share the knowledge and keep on writing.

So here we are now, ready to jump into another semester. Are we any better prepared? I know I am a bit more educated in the technology, so fingers crossed. Hopefully instructors have chosen a platform they will stick with through the entire semester as opposed to switching every day or week.

While school is out I have had the opportunity to provide CART for other events – wildfire information meetings, home visits, client calls. So on the less formal, not technical side, my fingers are also crossed for participants to remember a couple things: what you are wearing does matter – there's video people – and, yes, the day you choose not to worry about pants is the day you will stand up to reach for something... no one needs to hear what you are watching/listening to while you should be paying attention to the meeting/class; hitting unmute is not as obvious as you think it is... yep, been there...

Written by: Kim Portik



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# ZOOMING WITH ZOOM

by Nicole Buldis

In June, I decided to use this time to work on sharpening my skills and finish obtaining the last leg of my RMR, but I was also feeling the isolation that has come with social distancing and sheltering in place. It is hard to know what best practices are for pushing one's self to the next level, especially that pesky 260 testimony, while also maintaining self-motivation and accountability. I started reaching out via social media to see what everyone was doing and that is how I discovered Zoom practice groups. I found that working reporters and students alike were utilizing this form of technology as a new way to creatively gather and practice dictation with people working towards similar goals. I was invited to join a handful of seasoned reporters who were also working on obtaining the testimony portion of their RMR. Since then, we've had several others join us (ranging from exit speed students to



working reporters working on obtaining their RPR looking for a push to speed and realtime contest champions), sometimes as many as 20 at a time. We meet every day, even on weekends, and we play dictation between 270 to 300 words per minute. We work hard, exchange briefs, hold one another accountable, and cheer each other on.

The inspiration and camaraderie has been immeasurable in this weird time, and since this last round of testing in July, we've seen certification legs passed, reporters with new letters behind their name, and the rest of us hoping to level up come September.



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## COVID and me... by Tracy Johnston

Not a whole lot changed for me, aside from a different work schedule. As a result of the statewide stay-at-home restriction and the court's desire to reduce the number of people in the building, my day-to-day schedule changed. We began a split schedule of working from home and being at the courthouse. And

there are always transcripts to work on, so I did that. On the days I went to the courthouse, CRs continued to cover the hearings deemed essential, mostly for the criminal bench; and, of course, we covered grand jury. So, while the types and numbers of hearings were reduced, we were still in the courtroom making the record. Always. Every day. We returned to our regular work schedule June 1. As with

everyone, the biggest impact was not going anywhere because everything was closed. I couldn't clean out closets because the donation locations were closed, too. Zoom has become a regular part of my life. I did recently spruce up my backyard with some artificial turf. Poof! Backyard beautiful.



## In Memoriam: J.B. Brown



J.B. Brown, Co-founder of Brown & Toleu Court Reporting, passed May 7, 2020 after a short illness. J.B. studied reporting in his home state of New York. After a short year in California in 1958 he was heading back to New York and drove thru the Valley of the Sun (Phoenix), he immediately fell in love and never left. He started reporting right away with the courts. In 1963 with Gordon Toleu, he co-founded Brown & Toleu Court Reporting. J.B. Brown was involved with many reporters and attorneys in the community throughout his life and formed many great business relationships and friendships. One of his daughters thought it was normal to know someone everywhere you went only to realize it was all the people he had made connections with and championed in some way over the years. Gordy and J.B. grew the business to over 15 reporters at one time. In the 70's, J.B. was dedicated to the Court Reporters Association, he served as the treasurer, attended several conventions and even performed at the convention one year in a skit with his wife. He was remembered by

many for his giving nature to provide a chance in the business and for being fair to all. The firm provided superior work and quickly the reputation of the quality work spread. Gordy retired but J.B. continued to run and manage the business until its closure in 2013 when he retired at the age of 80. Working and knowledge of the business was something he valued all his life. He was sharp, very well read and loved to converse with people. We as his daughters would say that is probably why the business suited him well. His daughters have heard from so many of you in the reporting business to say how he had touched you or supported you in your career. We are proud to hear that. He served the reporting community well. He is preceded in death by his lovely blue eye wife of 47 years, the love of his life. Us daughters have a bit of solace in losing him to know they are now together. We will miss him and are very proud of the impact he made on the reporting community. As Marty Herder would call him to one of his daughters "The Legend." He was well respected and will be missed. We lost a good man.

Written by Dori Marinakis



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# MIDYEAR ARTICLE

by Kim Portik &  
Kate Roundy

Early morning registration and check-in, finding a seat, helping yourself to the breakfast buffet, and then conversing with fellow court reporter friends, that's how our association's conventions usually start out. Then there's buying raffle tickets, spending money at Kathy Hanchette's jewelry booth, perusing the other vendors' tables to check out what's for sale or what's for show. Maybe you participate in a writer auction. Oh, and don't forget the designer purse card game. Will you be one of the lucky ones who walks away with an elegant black purse? And then there is, of course, attending the different presentations to earn CEUs for the year. Leaving a seminar having learned new writing tricks, being apprised of current national CR trends, and then being entertained by some court reporting legend with a humorous story is an added treat.

Attending the seminar is one thing. Helping put it together is a whole other experience, an experience many have found very rewarding! It has been said that one highlight of serving on the Arizona Court Reporters Association (ACRA) Board is being a major player in putting together conventions for our members and non-members. Lots of planning is involved, and for each seminar new talent and perspectives are thrown into the mix, which hopefully makes it a fun experience for those who attend.

This year, however, 2020, the year of COVID-19, our Midyear Seminar plans were obliterated – poof, gone in an instant. Right before our seminar opened for registration, we were notified by the hotel that they were closing, which translated into our Midyear Seminar could not go forward as planned. A decision had to be made with only five weeks' time remaining: move the convention online or let our members down by simply canceling. The ACRA Board voted to persevere; yes, we would serve our members well by moving online!

Arizona was the first state to be approved by NCRA to move forward with an online CEU convention. We reached out to Katherine McNally immediately, requesting her assistance; she is very savvy with Zoom meetings from her time teaching online court reporting school. She graciously said, "Absolutely yes." Next, we had to ask our presenters if they'd be willing to walk this path with us, presenting their information remotely; luckily, all were willing. Another hurdle was deciding how to meet the requirements provided by NCRA to track attendance and active participation. And, importantly, we of course had to find a way to provide giveaways and have some fundraising. A lot had to come together, and with a lot of work, we made it a reality.

The day finally came. To practice social distancing, we limited our "headquarters" to only four people, and we relied on others to help from afar. We were a bundle of nerves, praying that it would all work smoothly. We were thrilled to have 97 people register, even a last-minute request (just like when we are in person; ah, the comforts of the familiar). Throughout the

*Midyear continued on Page 8...*



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# WHO SAVED WHO?

## BY KATE ROUNDY

You've seen those car window stickers that say "Who Rescued Who?"

Our household had been without a dog for nine months. After my beloved Westie passed away last fall, my husband and I were completely empty nesters. He was enjoying having no responsibility and made it clear he was in no hurry to get another dog. I begged for Christmas to no avail.

Three months later, the Coronavirus pandemic unleashed, and my typically hectic schedule came to a screeching halt. For the first few weeks of the Stay-at-Home Order, I was lonely and restless. I found my mind worrying. I was watching TV and plugged into social media at an unhealthy level. I felt like I was being punished, grounded not just from my family and friends, but from life.

My restless energy naturally led me to kick the puppy plea up a notch. "I have plenty of time to welcome and train a new puppy now." "This is the best time ever". The list goes on and on. Finally my husband succumbed to the idea of adopting another dog.

The day we adopted Peanut Butter, my life became full again!

I have had other dogs over the last 25 years, but there were usually kids around to help out and steal much of the dog's attention and love. This is not the case with Peanut Butter, our one-year-old little mixed breed. She is all mine. Well... maybe a tad my husband's too. He has nicknamed her Velcro because she's my little sidekick, my shadow, my new best furry friend.

Helping Peanut Butter adjust became my main focus. She needed a lot of TLC coming home from the Humane Society. It was deafening in there, and she had been confined to a small area for a solid week. By comparison, our house was silent. She was super scared of any noise, person, or animal that she came across. I spent time reading up on transitioning adopted dogs. We had lots of cuddle time, and I established a routine that she could count on. She took to it well.

Stuck at home, I was able to give this little girl a lot of attention, train her and exercise her properly. This has made all the difference in her anxiety-ridden state, and consequently, my own. We started out walking twice a day. Next, I taught her to swim laps in our pool. She now runs on a treadmill for short periods of time when she's acting "crazy!" Let's not forget the dog park. As soon as some of the restrictions were lifted, we ventured out to the dog park to socialize with other dogs and owners. What fun this has been for both Peanut Butter and me.



When I look back and reflect on this life-altering pandemic, I will immediately think of my new furry friend. Rescuing her saved my sanity, lifted my spirits, and made a lasting impact during this otherwise

trying time. One may say I rescued Peanut Butter, but really, she rescued me. I will always remember how adopting Peanut Butter gave me fuel to provide support and love to others! I love my dog.

Kate Roundy, ACRA Past President



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# EXTRA ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **ACRA Annual Seminar** via Zoom: September 19, 2020. Registration details to be announced soon!
- **Thank you to all** who have helped with the **Request a Reporter Program** covering out-of-town court hearings and trials.
- **Looking to volunteer** to give back to your profession, contact the ACRA Board for details: [office@acraonline.org](mailto:office@acraonline.org)
- **Wild West Court Reporter and Captioner Convention** has been reset for May 14 – 16, 2021 in Park City, Utah.
- **ACRA is always looking for articles for the next edition of ArizoNotes.**



## BISCOTTI

*Vivian Rossi*

### INGREDIENTS

- |                           |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 C. Sugar                | 1 C. Raisins (or Craisins chopped) |
| ¾ C. Oil                  | 1 C. Chopped Walnuts               |
| ¼ tsp. Salt               | 3 C. Flour                         |
| 3 Eggs                    | 1 tsp. Baking Soda                 |
| 1 tsp. Vanilla or Almond* | 1 tsp. Cinnamon                    |

### DIRECTIONS (I always double the batch)

Mix sugar, oil, salt, eggs and flavoring together (I use hand mixer). Add raisins and nuts.

Sift flour, baking soda and cinnamon into egg mixture.

Mix all ingredients together. Mix until dough is firm. Roll and shape into a log on un-greased cookie sheet.

Bake 375 degrees for 30 minutes.

Remove and cut into approx. 2" slices while still hot. Place cut side down on pan and bake about 10 mins.

Recipe provided by: Angela Miller

*\*Can use Anise flavoring in conjunction with Vanilla or Almond flavoring split 50/50*



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*Midyear continued from Page 5...*

seminar, we fielded questions in chat, we triggered attendance prompts, and we alleviated everyone's concerns - yes, we received your response, and, yes, you still get credit even though you thought the question was vague. I would like to think we handled it all brilliantly 😊 and it turned out to be a hit!

After the stress to make Midyear happen for our members, we greatly appreciated the slew of compliments. What a reward - and, boy, did we need that! Members were thankful that we were able to put a quality seminar together. We had positive feedback about the presenters. We have even had members ask us to consider doing one in-person seminar and one virtual seminar each year in the future.

So far 2020 has taught us all how to be flexible and roll with the flow. In April, I don't think anyone thought things would be as they still are today. With our Multi-State Convention sadly being postponed, ACRA has decided to offer its Annual Convention online as well - September 19, 2020 - this time a full day of CEU credits. Besides a great lineup of speakers, we will have a short ACRA business meeting, an introduction of this year's ACRA Board members, and gift card giveaways. Put the date on your calendar and join us once again!

Thank you for being an ACRA member. We appreciate each and every one of you!

Congratulations to the gift-card winners from the Midyear Seminar:

Scott Coniam - Amazon

Mary Davis - McDonald's

Christian DeGrazio - PetSmart

Marla Knox - Olive Garden

Cindy Lineburg - PetSmart

Ken Schippers - Home Goods

Penny Segundo - Texas Roadhouse

Suzanne Simms - Chili's

Written by: Kim Portik and Kate Roundy



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