



HAWAII COURT REPORTERS & CAPTIONERS ASSOCIATION

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ONE REPORTER'S STORY

by Valerie Mariano Swiderski

I absolutely love my job. My court reporting life in Hawaii has been spent working freelance on the island of Oahu. In addition to Oahu, my duties have taken me to the Big Island, Maui, Kauai, Lanai, and Molokai, as well as American Samoa, Japan, and Kwajalein atoll in the Federated States of Micronesia. I've reported depositions, labor arbitrations, National Labor Relations Board hearings, collective bargaining negotiations, grand jury testimony, and federal District Court proceedings, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Court reporting for me was a second career, so I was already in my thirties when I showed up for my first job. I was spared the typical inquisition: "How long have you been doing this?" But I clearly remember my first deposition in Hawaii. It was a Family Court case. Things were moving right along. There were a couple of names that were difficult for me, but my phonetic writing skills were up to the task. (No briefs for words like Kalaniana'ole because KAL/KAL could just as easily be Kalakaua.) After we were adjourned, I had to ask for help spelling the name Nakamura and was met with the immediate retort: "How long have you *been here?*!" You see, not knowing how to spell Nakamura is akin to not knowing how to spell Smith. I look back now on that incident with the appropriate horror.

During my time in Hawaii I've helped crew a sailboat for both the weekly "beer can" races and the competitive season. I learned how to paddle outrigger canoes and even competed in Na Wahine O Ke Kai, the 41-mile long-distance event from Molokai to Oahu. I've Boogie-boarded, surfed, snorkeled, and SCUBA'd. I've watched whales cavorting by simply pulling over to the side of the road during a "commute." I've swum with turtles and dolphins. I've plunged into the pool at the base of a waterfall, hiked to the top of a rain-forested mountain and across a steaming volcano's caldera. I've visited the Philippines, Malaysia, Guam, Australia, Papua New Guinea. I've developed a love affair with sushi and palusami. I've learned words in Hawaiian and Japanese and Filipino. I've mastered the art of the interpreted deposition and have learned to pronounce the name Nguyen. And I've gained friends who always welcome me with open arms. And I no longer have to ask how to spell Nakamura, or Nakayama, or Nakagawa.