

President's Talk December 2010:

The President's address this year was on How Shorthand Helped Save the Day.

First of all, I would like to thank you all for being here. A personal thank you to June for organising everything and sorry that she could not be here to help enjoy the festivities. I would also like to say thank you to Margaret Pitman-Miller for attending as well.

Most of you are probably aware that I did work for Pitman Training, primarily as a shorthand tutor, but also as an IT tutor. With the times of the day, unfortunately, I was actually made redundant. I was served noticed back in June. They said: "It is just with the financial difficulties that we are all having. Unfortunately you are very expensive and we do not have enough projects coming in to keep you afloat, so I am afraid, we are going to have to get rid of you." However, they wanted me to stay for another month to help with the existing projects, to finalise and hand over, and so on.

In addition to that they said if I would like, I could do some additional courses to help boost up my CV. I took full advantage of that. They would pay for it, but I had to do it all in my own time. Therefore, the last four weeks, every evening and Saturdays, when I wasn't teaching, I was there in the training centre trying to get as many certificates and diplomas to add to my CV as I could

I actually came out with another four diplomas on my CV!

When I left I thought, well, what am I going to do because my CV is very broad. I have a mixed bag of skills. I wasn't sure that there was enough work out there as a shorthand tutor, so I just put my CV out on to different websites and I thought, well, I'll see what comes back to me. Initially, there was an American company that was extremely interested. It was a law company that actually had several offices in the States. They also had one office located in London. They wanted somebody who was a 50:50 split as 50% secretarial, 50% IT support. They saw my CV and said: Well, it's got everything we need, let's interview him. I actually had several interviews, from the States, by telephone, late in the evening. I got through the first two stages and then, on the final stage, somebody asked me the question: "Well, what do you feel about shorthand?" I said: "Well, I love shorthand. You know, I am obsessed with it." Wrong answer! Didn't get the job.

In a sense, I kind of made my own choice by having said that. As a result of that answer the agency then dropped me like a lead balloon. They said, well, we have no work for you as a shorthand tutor.

One of the other training companies, the person that normally worked there was, unfortunately for them, taken seriously ill and somebody that was filling in said, would I mind filling in just for a couple of hours a week, just to tidy up and finish off that course. I went in two evenings a week and Saturday, just to finish off that course. Anyway, the person who was on sick leave remained on sick leave, so to speak, and they asked if I could continue to deliver the course. I said, sure, I can do that, but then I had a dilemma. Were they going to give me enough work to go full-time, or I had to find some other ways and means to get enough income to survive on. One of the other people that I have known as a contact out there who is a shorthand tutor she said, well, actually we have another project that you may be interested in. Then Pitman, who made me redundant, said, well, if you do decide to go self-employed as a shorthand tutor, would you still like to continue to deliver our evening classes for us and perhaps we can even give you some additional work in between. So, here I am all this work suddenly coming to me, I am thinking, well, okay, it looks like I am going to be self-employed then. From having always in my life been looked after

by corporate companies, etc., and having everything set up to deliver the courses, and them all having their set routines, all of a sudden I am self-employed, I have to find out how to run a business, how to run a company and I have about four major projects, contracts, which is great, but each one wants something different. They all want shorthand delivery, they all want Teeline shorthand delivery. That's fine, but some want to run it under 30 hours as a main course, some want it as a 45 hour course, some want it over a whole year term and then there's another company that want to use something called Teeline-online as the main learning tool and just to use me to help top up the learning. Each session is completely different and for each one I need to add in new material, or borrow material from other colleagues, which thanks to these contacts have been ever so helpful and supportive, that we can help and support another and it's been a real good team effort. One of the projects we actually share between the three of us so it has been quite good.

But, without the knowledge of shorthand, I would be without a job, so thank goodness to shorthand every day.

Richard said that sometimes on a Monday I am helping out Pitman deliver a project at City University and I probably do one hour. Then I have nothing for about seven hours and then I am going to do their evening course for them for one and a half hours, so you have to use the space in between wisely – catch up on the paperwork or to do marking as well as produce your own invoices and get those sent off in order to get paid.

At the conclusion of his address the President wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

The Chairman thanked Richard warmly for his address.