

Payment Practices Lists

By Naomi de Moraes

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Come to Phoenix!

**There's still
enough time to
register for the
44th Annual
ATA Conference
at Pointe South
Mountain
Resort in
Phoenix, AZ.**

**Nov. 5 - 8,
2003**

There are two free-lance translator/client models currently in use in the world today: translators working for direct clients and translators working for translation agencies that deal with direct clients. Many full-time career translators prefer to work for direct clients because, by cutting out the middleman, they earn more for the same work. Some also feel it is more satisfying because they have more contact with the client, can ask questions and receive more accurate feedback, and can target their translations. My experience has been that after translating 10 manuals for slightly different products for the same company, I would be happy to never have to deal with that type of product again, even though I can now translate manuals of this type at the speed of light and would make a good profit. Many part-time, beginner and even full-time career translators prefer to deal with translation agencies. The benefits are steady work (they generally have more clients), regular payment checks, and the freedom to go on vacation without having to worry that a client will be left high and dry in his hour of need. The main disadvantage is not knowing whom you are dealing with and when or IF they will really pay you.

In either case, I highly recommend you

have all clients sign some type of purchase order or contract. The ATA model contract or the ITI terms and conditions guidelines are a start. In addition to looking professional, it helps both you and the client understand exactly what is expected by both sides. You may ask, "Will this signed contract be valid in a court of law?" In today's global marketplace, the main problem is not the legality of the contract, but how much it will cost you to get it enforced. In the US, getting money from a company in another state is difficult enough. Imagine a translator in Brazil trying to collect money from a Danish company!

To protect free-lance translators, two kind

souls run client reference lists: Ted Wozniak moderates the Payment Practices (PP) list (see references at end of article) and Laura Hastings moderates the Translator Client Review (TCR) list. Both have members from all over

the world. The former has over 1,400 members and the latter has about 1,800 members. The PP archive contains over 5,000 messages (queries and responses). Many translators like myself are members of both lists.

How do these lists work?

First, let me explain what they have in common. After a translator is approved for membership, she can send in a query stating



as much information as possible about the company: name, contact, address, e-mail address, web site, telephone, etc. The PP list is stricter, and more information must be provided for a query to be accepted. The name of the agency (and often the city and country) is placed in the subject line for easy reference. When the query is posted to the list, members are asked to come forward with their good or bad experiences with the company in question (or one of its previous incarnations). The subject of rates charged by translators is strictly off limits. Both of these lists are moderated, which means that all messages must first be approved (as having conformed to the rules of the lists) before they are posted.

The differences between the lists

The PP list is very no-nonsense. Queries are submitted by filling out a form on the list site, and respondents complete a response section providing timeframes, amounts, and comments. The moderator assigns a “rating” from 0 (no payment) to 5 (+/- 10 days from agreed terms) based on how late payment was received and inserts that in the subject line. There is almost no room for chit chat. This is nice sometimes. The PP list is also free.

The TCR list is run using a private list service, while the PP list uses the free Yahoo group service. The TCR list only requires that you include one unique identifier, which can be an e-mail address, physical address, telephone number, or fax number. You should

always include AS MUCH information as possible, but if all you have is an e-mail address or phone number, that is enough. (However, if that is all the information you have, do you really want to extend credit to the client?)

The TCR list costs \$12 (US) per year. One-month free trial subscriptions are available to new subscribers, and free memberships and scholarships are also available to those who need them. You can pay by Pay Pal, credit card, personal check (with some restrictions) or money order. Some people get together and pool their resources to send one larger check to pay for several subscriptions rather than each paying the bank fees individually. The TCR list allows some discussion, but a separate list called TCR-D was created for chatting and many times the moderator sends issues there. Sometimes you can get a better feel for an agency’s style by reading the long descriptions, which can be just as important as whether a company will pay soon or not. The TCR list produces approximately 20 messages a day, with much less volume on the weekends.

Tips for using this type of list

- Look up companies in the archives first. If a company was discussed the week before, your query may be ignored, resulting in a false impression (that no news is good news).

- Try to respond rapidly when you have information to share. The client rarely waits a few days to place a job. However, do not complain if someone

responds late. We do work for a living!

- Do not receive list emails in your regular account! Create a second account to deal with all list mail. If you use a web-based account, keep it within your storage limits to avoid “bouncing” email. I have a nice sorting scheme set up: all PP/TCR mail is sent from the inbox to a second folder, and then sorted by country based on the country provided in the subject line. I also sort by company name for all companies I have worked for so I can quickly respond to queries. Whenever I go on vacation, I use an auto-responder for my business account, but not for the list account. People using one account will have to go to “no mail” to avoid sending automatic responses to the lists and being banned, or having their in boxes filled to overflowing and bouncing all their e-mail.


- If a company does not show up in the archives, or shows up but with no responses, submit a query. Sometimes I have queried the list and received only off-list responses—usually bad, but I sure was glad to know!

References:

Translator Client Review (TCR): www.trclist.com

Payment Practices List (PP): http://www.trwenterprises.com/payment_practices.htm

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From the Administrator

Ken Wagner



This is an election year in the JLD. A new slate of JLD administrators will take office at this year's conference in Phoenix. I'm Ken Wagner of Shoreline, Washington, and I will move up from assistant administrator to administrator. Carl Sullivan of Ephraim, Utah will become assistant administrator, and Rika Mitrik of Gaithersburg, Maryland will take over as

secretary treasurer.

A change of administration is not all that is planned for the ATA's 44th Annual Conference, November 5-8, this year. The JLD is hosting nine sessions listed in the program. A JLD Forum (not listed) is also planned. In addition, we will have an "informal gathering" after the opening reception Wednesday night, and the customary JLD dinner on Thursday night. Other divisions throughout the ATA are also sponsoring presentations on interpreting, translation, and accreditation that should be of interest to J<->E practitioners.

There are some exciting changes on the horizon for the JLD. The future of our print directory is in limbo. We experimented with a CD directory. That was a little less expensive than print, but for my money a little hard to work with. However, the ATA's online Directory of Translation and Interpreting Services can now be manipulated to display division directories. It therefore may not be necessary to produce a division directory anymore. If that's the case, the JLD could have several thousand dollars a year to use for something else—maybe even contributing to IJET in some way. People attending the conference will be able to voice their opinions on this and other issues at the JLD business meeting and JLD forum.

Speaking of IJET, John Zimet, organizer of IJET 15, May 22-23 in Yokohama, will be attending the Phoenix conference. This will be a great opportunity to give him your input on IJET or even offer to help. Almost all ATA divisions now hold their own language-specific or field-specific conferences. The JLD is lucky because JAT (the Japan Association of Translators) has been sponsoring IJETs for 15 years.

Of course, there are also the networking and job search opportunities, heated discussions on translation with J<->E colleagues, and just plain fun. I hope you can fit the ATA conference in Phoenix into your schedule. See you in Phoenix.

Ken Wagner
JLD Administrator Nominee

JURASSIC PARLIAMENT

ATA Conference Session Review

By Kathy Hall Foster

Editor's note: As you all know, this year's ATA Conference will take place in Phoenix, AZ between November 5 and 8. Here's a report on a session that took place at last year's ATA Conference in Atlanta. Informative and entertaining sessions such as this one are par for the course at ATA Annual Conferences. So are opportunities to meet and network with other translators, both in your language pair and in other language pairs.

Ever been to a meeting where someone invoked "Robert's Rules of Order" and you wondered what those rules meant, and who this guy Robert was anyway? Ever been to a meeting where you wanted to make your views known, but didn't know just how to go about doing it? Ever been to a meeting where things got totally out of hand with everyone talking at once? Ever think that dinosaurs could provide the answer to these questions and more? If not, you haven't experienced ... **JURASSIC PARLIAMENT**, the larger-than-life blockbuster brought to you by producer/director extraordinaire Ann Macfarlane.

Set in a jungle of trees and unhatched dinosaur eggs, Jurassic Parliament was an enjoyable and participatory learning experience that presented the basic concepts of parliamentary procedure and gave class attendees the skills and knowledge necessary to run good meetings according to Robert's Rules of Order.

Following a brief history of parliamentary procedure, including an introduction to General Henry Martyn Robert, whose rules of parliamentary law were published in 1876, Ann presented various methods of decision-making ranging from the duel—where the strongest one wins, to the consensus—where everyone must agree. Types of meetings were described, with an emphasis in this training on small boards of five to twenty people.

Some key guidelines for small board meetings included not having to wait for a

formal motion to begin discussion, asking for the floor before speaking, following Robert's Rules of Order, and setting ground rules right away, including rules for discussing, deciding, and voting. We were told to remember that unless otherwise stated in the bylaws, common parliamentary law prevails.

Ten principles for successful meetings were discussed: 1. The presider is in charge and doesn't vote unless there is a tie. 2. Don't try to do it all yourself. 3. One thing at a time. 4. Keep the process clear. 5. Follow the rules of debate (recognition, courtesy, and no cross talk. Ways to avoid side conversations could be to stand at ease, to pass notes, to leave the room, or to call a recess.) 6. Speak once and then let others have a turn. 7. Ask if anyone has any concerns not yet expressed. 8. The motion belongs to the assembly. 9. General consent when possible. 10. Call for the vote and announce the results; remember the vote isn't legal unless the negative is called for.

One of the key links in the parliamentary process is the presider. The three principles of an effective presider are being centered, clear, and fair. The presider must plan the meeting; create an agenda; monitor the physical, psychological, and emotional aspects of the meeting; articulate his/her own position; and stay connected to the members. As a presider, I always have to remember that it isn't "my" meeting or "my" organization, it's "ours."

After these preliminary discussions, the time finally arrived for the dinosaurs to make their presence known. Once they were brought into play, they served to illustrate the precedence of motions, amendments, call for the question, and

points of procedure, starting with the Tyrannosaurus rex (main motion) and going down to the Pterodactyls (point of order, point of information, and point of privilege), with the Dimetrodon (primary amendment), the Brontosaurus (secondary amendment), the Triceratops (call for the question) and the Ankylosaurus (motion to refer to committee) appearing along the way. The size and pecking order of the dinosaurs was a visual representation of the priority of each of these elements in the flow of parliamentary procedure, and the class got lots of "hands-on" work connecting the various pieces into the correct sequence.

The significance of each of these



dinosaurs was then demonstrated by role-playing, with the members of the class taking on the identity of various persons involved in a meeting of the Dinosaur Benevolent Association. Each member of the class had an opportunity to make a motion or amendment, to state an opinion, or to raise a question regarding various proposed activities of the association. By participating in a live example of a meeting and by seeing first-hand how the different elements interacted, class members got a chance to see how meetings really operate and how to make them work for the group rather than against the group. By the time the class was over, we had a

much better grasp of the meeting process, and we had managed to have fun while doing it!

For more information on parliamentary procedure, check out the National Association of Parliamentarians (www.parliamentarians.org) and the

American Institute of Parliamentarians (www.aipparlipro.org).

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Fulbright Scholarship. She is an active member of the ATA, accredited English-French-English, serves on the Board of Directors of the Mid-America Chapter of ATA (MICATA), and is the editor of the MICATA Monitor.



Association of Language Companies First Annual Conference

By Ken Sakai

The First Annual Conference of the Association of Language Companies (ALC: www.alcus.org) was held June 12th through 14th in Portland, Oregon—just a hop, skip, and a jump away from the town of Salem, Oregon, where I live. My company, Pacific Dreams, is not yet a member of the ALC, but since the conference was to be held in Portland, I felt obliged to investigate the proceedings. In this column, I report my observations.

The conference was attended by fifty-five participants, representing some forty-five different companies. The program began on the evening of June 12th with a welcome reception and an icebreaker activity, enabling participants to get to know each other in small groups. We gathered in groups of ten people or so per table and introduced ourselves to one another. I was surprised by the diversity of businesses that fall under the umbrella of “translation companies”. There was one company that specialized in providing oral interpreters for dozens of different language combinations, another that offered mainly language education, another dedicated solely to Russian translation and interpretation, another that produced subtitles and dubbing for movies, and another that specialized in Spanish legal translation. In sum, no two companies shared the same business profile. Naturally, there were no other companies that focused exclusively on Japanese, as mine does.

On the second day, guest speakers offered seminars on various specialized topics. Each seminar lasted from thirty minutes to an hour. Thereafter, the participants would form groups called “round tables” to discuss the themes in question. The themes included

such topics as “HR Management,” “Sales and Marketing,” “Contracting Freelance Translators,” “Integrated Software Management,” “Translation Memory (TM) Tools,” and “Managing Translation Formatting.” Each individual theme could easily have fueled a discussion group for half a day. I was particularly impressed by the first keynote speaker, who gave a presentation on “Translating Your Vision into Breakthrough Business Results.” The speaker quoted hints from one of my favorite books, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, by Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras, so I felt particularly in tune with the topic.

As the conference progressed, I noticed that on average, these American translation companies consisted of five or six employees and had been in business for seven or eight years. As I mentioned earlier, the translation industry is also characterized by the diversity in the business profiles of individual companies. I don’t have any concrete statistics, but I would estimate that over half of American translation companies are Mom and Pop businesses, managed by only one or two people. Pacific Dreams has been in business for eleven years now and currently consists of 12 employees. It was a strange feeling to realize that my company now outranks the average American translation firm in both longevity and size.

The attendees of the conference not only represented American translation companies, but also firms in Canada, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. In addition, I encountered representatives from U.S. state governments and from the Pentagon, indicating the high level of interest that the conference has

succeeded in drawing. Unfortunately, I seemed to be the only Japanese person in attendance, but I found the American conference atmosphere refreshing, with its streamlined, discussion-oriented style of management. Many of the American attendees represented translation companies located on the East Coast or in the Midwest, and were visiting Oregon for the first time. I heard many people offer words of praise, such as that Portland was a very beautiful city, and that the quality and service of the hotel were first class. As an Oregonian, I couldn’t help but smile. I felt that the First Annual ALC Conference was quite a success, setting an excellent precedent for future years.

Next year’s conference is scheduled to be held in Washington DC. Whether or not I attend will have to depend on Pacific Dream’s business performance results over the next year. This gives me a new goal: to improve our translation technique and quality and achieve excellent company performance results so that I can attend the Second Annual ALC Conference in Washington, D.C.

Ken Sakai is President of Pacific Dreams, a company specializing in technical Japanese <-> English translation and interpretation, especially in the field of semiconductors.



This article is reprinted from HonyakuTALK, the monthly e-mail magazine of Pacific Dreams. Pacific Dreams, Inc., is a translation company based in Salem, Oregon. The company website is at <http://www.pacificdreams.org>.

Overcoming Stage Fright from Ballet to Interpreting

By Izumi Suzuki

Since I was a young child, my dream was to become a classic ballet dancer. I started ballet at six, and entered the Tchaikovsky-Memorial Tokyo Ballet Company when I was 17. I danced every day from morning till night, 6 days a week. I was in the corps-de-ballet. One summer I had an opportunity to study under a Royal Ballet Academy teacher in England. She made me see reality: I would never make a soloist, because I was too tall even by English standards. But I would make a good teacher. She could write a recommendation letter for me to take a teacher's course at the Royal Ballet Academy.

This made me think seriously about my future. Could I be financially independent as a corps-de-ballet dancer? If not, did I want to be a ballet teacher? If so, should I go to the Royal Ballet Academy? I realized that, however much I loved ballet, I could never be a soloist (let alone a prima ballerina), and make enough money to be independent. Besides, a dancer's life on the stage is very short—maybe up to age 30 or so. But then, what? The only way to make enough money to support myself would be to become a ballet teacher, but that was not what I wanted. Did this mean I should quit ballet? I was good enough to be in the Company, because I worked very hard, but I was not talented enough to be a soloist (overcoming the problem of my height).

What troubled me most was the question of whether quitting ballet would mean that what I had done all my life until then would become meaningless and a waste. If I gave up the “Tao” (Way of life) that I had built so far, would I be a failure? I agonized over this question for a month. I cried every night.

While I was with the Tokyo Ballet, I started to go to the Japan Interpreters Training School (JITS). My original pur-

pose was not to be an interpreter, but to energize my brain. As I was dancing all day every day, I felt my brain cells dying by the thousands: I was always too tired to read, I did not know what was happening in the world, and I didn't share any intellectual conversation with anyone. Since my mother went to JITS to brush up her English when she was young, she recommended that I do the same, and I did. I was not particularly interested in English, but that was one subject that I always had high marks in at school. It was at JITS that I met Mr. Michihiro Matsumoto. He was one of the two simultaneous interpreting teachers that I learned from there. He talked a lot about his “Way of Life” regarding English. I was very moved by his enthusiasm for English and interpreting.

Mr. Matsumoto taught me that my “Way of Life” could continue even if I quit ballet and started something else. What I had built through ballet wouldn't be wasted. I could continue to build my “Way of Life” through whatever I did. This helped me make the biggest decision in my life thus far: I quit the Company, and I quit ballet to cut myself off completely from my previous life. I decided to become a simultaneous interpreter. Mr. Matsumoto introduced me to ISS, which offered a simultaneous interpreting training course. I took an entrance exam in English and in Japanese, and was fortunate enough to pass the exam and to be included in a class of 20 people.

I continued to go to JITS at night, since the ISS course was during the day. After a while I felt I needed to have more basic knowledge in various areas, and started a study group with my classmates at ISS. We studied Samuelson's Economics, World History, and Japanese History (in that order). I was blessed with excellent teachers at ISS, too. Mrs. Yukika Sohma was a pioneer in simultaneous interpreting between Japanese and

English, together with Mr. Sen Nishiyama, and she taught us that interpreting is not about substituting words and sentences into the other language: it is intended to communicate feelings expressed and implied in words. If you can't convey the speaker's heart, you had better not even try, because you will just create misunderstandings. Mrs. Sohma is a daughter of a famous statesman, Yukio Ozaki, who gave the cherry trees to Washington DC. She is 91, and the current chairperson of the JIRAI O NAKUSU KAI (Organization to Eliminate Land Mines). I saw her last year for the first time in 25 years or so. She hasn't changed, and is as energetic as ever.

Mrs. Sohma's daughter, Mrs. Hara, was also my teacher. She is the best simultaneous interpreter of Japanese and English I've ever known. Her interpreting doesn't have any waste. She catches all the points and communicates them precisely in a manner that the audience understands easily. She speaks slowly and clearly in a low voice. I also learned

掲載記事大募集！

The JLD Times is looking for submissions for its Winter issue. If you have something you would like to write about, or come across an article elsewhere that you think might interest the readership, please contact JLD Times Editor Irith Bloom at music@despammed.com (if you don't hear back within a few days, please post to the JLD-List with the name “Irith Bloom” in the subject line; despammed.com sometimes rejects legitimate mail). Reviews and reflections on the Annual Conference at Phoenix are particularly welcome. Thank you!

from her voice control technique. The female high voice is very tiring to hear, and the interpreter should know the quality of her own voice over the microphone and control it so that it is pleasant to the audience. I also saw her with Mrs. Sohma last year, and she hasn't changed either. I felt like time only passed through me—I have certainly gotten much older than when I was in my twenties while learning under them.

The ISS course was for three years, and only two people graduated from the course. The other student, I heard, later became a simultaneous interpreter at the UN. While I was taking the course, ISS gave me various jobs. They were very considerate in choosing jobs for me, and they gave me easy jobs in the beginning and harder and harder jobs later. We were also given opportunities to do conference-interpreting jobs: ISS sometimes rented their conference room to groups, and we students got in the booths there and interpreted for such groups. ISS didn't charge them for simultaneous interpreting, and we 'tried' to interpret as much as we could. Since it was a free service, clients didn't complain, and we could experience the real atmosphere of simultaneous interpreting.

I studied very hard, and the efforts I made all bore fruit for me. When I was dancing, I didn't feel that way. I felt I worked harder than anybody else, but my effort was not proportionate to my achievement. It seemed that the harder I worked, the less I achieved. I felt like I was putting water in sand. I kept asking myself, "Why don't I get better when I am working so hard?" And I saw younger dancers who didn't seem to be trying so hard turn pirouettes effortlessly, raise their legs high in arabesque, and jump high in difficult combinations. I was jealous, and I was mentally and

physically tired. Studying for interpreting was a completely different matter. Of course in the beginning, I didn't do well at all. We were to tape all our interpreting while listening to practice tapes. In the beginning, I only heard myself utter "Uhh, aah, well, and this, uh, you know, (cough)." It was disgusting. I sounded like a complete fool. But as I studied over and over, I got better. I could acquire what I studied, and it was reflected in my interpreting. Compared with ballet, everything was easier. To this day, nothing is too hard for me (such that I have to give up). I can say this because I know I once dedicated every bit of myself to ballet.

Through jobs I received during the course, there were a couple of occasions that I felt enlightened. One occasion was when I was interpreting for a trainer hired by Sony for an athletic tape. It was the first time for me to be in front of a big audience (about 50, which I REAL-

LY perceived as a BIG audience), and I had butterflies flapping all over in my stomach. When I uttered my first words, my voice came out of the top of my head. It probably went on for a few minutes, but it felt like eternity. Then I told myself, "They are not people. They are potatoes." And suddenly with 50 potatoes in front of me, my voice came back to itself, and I calmed down. I

smiled, and after that, I was fine. The other occasion was when I interpreted for a press interview for the first time. I was very nervous and told my client, Mr. O'Callahan, so. The older gentleman from the Canadian Government told me how good my English was, and assured me there was nothing to worry about. His encouragement helped me tremendously, and when a reporter started to ask the Canadian gentleman questions, I was able to put myself in the reporter's per-

spective: I got what he wanted to hear, and I was able to arrange the Canadian's answers in the most understandable way for the reporter. This does not mean the interpreter changes the meaning of what the speaker says, but it is the interpreter's job to make sure that the listener understands. Mr. O'Callahan died of acute leukemia in Japan soon after he made another trip to Japan, so I never saw him again, but his kind words still linger in my heart.

While I was a student at ISS, I took an interpreter certification test from the Interpreting Certification Association. After I received notice that I passed the test, I got a phone call from the organization. They said I was No. 1, and would I make a practice tape with Mr. Sen Nishiyama as a teacher and me as a student of simultaneous interpreting? I accepted the offer. I was put in a booth and interpreted as I heard a tape. Mr. Nishiyama corrected my interpretation, and then I did it again. I interpreted the same tape three times with Mr. Nishiyama correcting me each time, and that was it. I don't even remember what I interpreted. I had never been so nervous in my life. Mr. Nishiyama, at that time, was the best-known simultaneous interpreter in Japan. He interpreted the first voice from the moon: he was the head of interpreters at the American Embassy, and was Mr. Matsumoto's boss there. Mr. Matsumoto, whom I respected tremendously, always talked to me about Mr. Nishiyama with a sense of awe. Just being in front of him made me nervous enough, and I had to interpret simultaneously (with him correcting me) to make a tape to be sold to the public. I never wanted to listen to that tape, and I never did.

Mr. Nishiyama was very kind and patient. He smiled at me so that I would relax (well, I couldn't). I thought he was flabbergasted with my interpreting and left feeling discouraged. However, soon after this taping, he called me and asked me very politely: "I have this client of mine that I can't take care of any longer, since I am so busy. Could you take this over?" I was stunned and delighted, and

The ATA has given me so much in terms of opening my eyes to a bigger world, and giving me opportunities to learn many things and to get to know many wonderful people.

said “yes” right away. It was for an automotive parts company. I worked with this company for a number of years, until I left Japan upon my marriage to my American husband.

I came to Michigan in 1978. My son Ken was born the following year in Grand Rapids, and then we moved back to Japan in 1980 due to my husband’s assignment to be the CEO of a company in Japan. My daughter Jun was born in 1982, and we came back to Michigan in the same year. My husband and I decided that I should not do full-time work until our younger child turned two, so I did a little bit of teaching ballet (I restarted ballet 2 years after I left the Tokyo Ballet Company, when I felt that I was well on the way to becoming an interpreter) and Ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement in which I became a third-degree master), besides doing translation and interpreting.

When my husband left his company, we decided to establish our own company: Suzuki, Myers & Associates, Ltd., in Grand Rapids in 1984. Our company offers US/Japan interface consulting and language services. Grand Rapids, then, was a conservative, sleepy city, and we found ourselves commuting to the Detroit area quite often. At the end of 1985 we moved to the suburbs of Detroit. We couldn’t have asked for better timing. It was right about then that Japanese automotive companies were coming to the area. Mazda built an assembly plant, and encouraged their suppliers to follow them. All the major Japanese vehicle manufacturers established R&D centers in and around Ann Arbor. Ford and Mazda started to talk, GM and Toyota

started to negotiate on the NUMMI joint venture, and Chrysler and Mitsubishi were discussing Diamond Star Motors, their joint venture. In a matter of ten years, the number of Japanese companies in the area exploded from fewer than 30 to nearly 300.

My familiarity with automotive engineering and business helped me establish relationships with clients. Every job was an opportunity to learn more about the automotive industry. One day I got a call from a company called ASI (American Supplier Institute). They train companies in the Quality Control area, and they needed an interpreter for QC instructors from the Central Japan Quality Control Association. I went to have an interview with them, and they hired me. They offered me their QC courses and seminars free of charge to prepare myself for the job, and I jumped at the offer. My business sense told me that this would be a hot area for many years to come, and that learning QC and related areas would place me ahead of competitors. I learned Policy Management, Statistical Quality Control, Total Quality Management, Quality Function Deployment, Quality Assurance System, Toyota Production System, and the Taguchi Method (Quality Engineering). The knowledge I gained has been useful in my interpreting to this day.

My experience in the QC area also helped me get a job from the Japan Institute of Plant Maintenance later in 1989, when they first came to Ford to give an executive seminar on TPM (Total Productive Maintenance). TPM focuses on equipment maintenance to eliminate defects and eventually change people’s attitude towards work on the production floor. It complements TQM, and supports TPS. It is not just an improvement tool but also a total system to improve an entire company. The concept of TPM was so interesting to me that I read many, many books (both in English and Japanese). I went to

the production floor of various manufacturers with instructors, and they taught me how one should look at machines and processes. I even worked with other trainees cleaning machines to learn about equipment mechanisms and functions. I still love to work in this area.

It was also in 1989 that I joined the American Translators Association. I heard about the ATA through a friend of mine. She told me that the ATA offered an accreditation exam in translation. From my school days, I was good at tests. I had a knack for studying for tests, and usually got higher marks than my actual abilities merited. When I was in high school, classes were divided by grades, and I was in the best class. We used to make our own tests to give to one another during breaks to cover areas that we thought teachers didn’t cover well. (Yes, we were hated by the students in other classes, and we knew we were ‘weird.’) So when I heard about this translation test, my old love for tests came back and I decided to try it out. So I went to the Annual Conference in Arlington Heights, VA, and joined the Japanese Language Division. It is hard to express my surprise fully: I had never seen so many Americans speaking and writing and reading Japanese so easily and so fluently. I was not just impressed, I was moved. I felt how small my world had been. I felt like a little chicken surrounded by eagles. One person who particularly impressed me was Mr. Don Gorham. He gave a lecture on court interpreting in his session. That was an area that I did not know at all, and his fluency in Japanese was just unbelievable. I was also impressed with John Bukacek’s leadership as the JLD Administrator. Later I received a notice that I had passed the test. At that time, the ATA only offered accreditation from Japanese to English.

A couple of years after that, the accreditation exam from English to Japanese was offered for the first time, and I of course took it. I had two jobs in Japan that fall, and I came to the conference in Utah directly from Japan. I had asked my office to send dictionaries to

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me at the hotel in time for the exam. When I checked in, the hotel said they hadn't received any mail for me. I didn't believe them and went all over the building with a hotel staff person looking for a big box of dictionaries. My office said they had sent them. They never arrived, and I had to take the test without my dictionaries. Fortunately, at that time it was still allowed for candidates to share dictionaries, so I was at the mercy of other Japanese candidates who sat at the same table as I. I finished the test in two hours, and left the room first. When I came back to the room, my kind roommate comforted me: "There is always next time, you know." She thought I had given up on my test.

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I got a notice again that I passed that test, too, and was asked by Don Gorham and other graders at that time to be a grader for J>E and E>J. I said no to J>E; I felt I was not good enough to grade other people's English. However, for E>J, I thought it was an honor to be asked to become a grader, and I accepted the position. Since then, I have become the Language Chair of the E>J Subcommittee. One or two years later, I was asked to be the Program Chair of the JLD, which gave me a chance to talk and become friends with many JLD members. It was fun. The ATA has given me so much in terms of opening my eyes to a bigger world, and giving me opportunities to learn many things and to get to know many wonderful people. When I felt it was about time to return what I gained from the ATA, I ran for the Board and became the first Asian to be on the Board. I wrote a report every quarter for three years to let the JLD members know what the Board was doing. I learned so many things under the leadership of Ann Macfarlane, who was the President at that time. I

made more friends beyond the JLD. When I finished my term as a Director, I became the JLD Administrator. The division had been dear to my heart, and I thought I could contribute some to the betterment of the Division. I will be finishing my term this coming November.

It was also at an ATA conference where I met my fellow Michigan interpreters and translators. They were trying to organize a group in Michigan, and I joined with a dozen other Michiganders. It was a very informal group that met once a month or so. When it started to lose its original steam, due to people moving away and quitting interpreting or translation jobs, some of we founding members decided to make

the group more organized, with a Board to revitalize it. My husband, a lawyer, helped us. We created a Board of five directors, which selected the President, and took the name Michigan Translators/Interpreters Network (MiTiN). After a few years, I became the President. Now we have over 100 members, and we are trying to upgrade MiTiN from an ATA "affiliate group" to an ATA Chapter.

Three years ago, I learned through MiTiN that the Supreme Court of Michigan had become a member of the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification in 1999. A lady from the State of Michigan Court Administration Office contacted me to let me know about their first court interpreting workshop in Detroit. The workshop was "language neutral" and she wanted as many MiTiN members as possible to come to the workshop. Several of us went, and we received well-prepared materials. The instructors were of high caliber, and the workshop was very well done. We learned that Michigan was administering

the first court interpreter certification exam in Spanish. I received a big collection of court interpreting glossaries for Spanish and English. They said that the next language they would test would be Arabic (Michigan has a population of half a million Arabs). Japanese was not even in the first ten. However, they told me that if one gets certified in one of the states that is a member of the consortium, they would also recognize that certification in Michigan.

I searched and found out that California was the only state that gave a certification exam in Japanese. I contacted the Judicial Council of California/Administrative Offices of the Courts and received information from Cooperative Personnel Services, which actually administers the exam. There is a written test, and an oral test later if one passes the written test. I applied for the written test, and went to Los Angeles to take it. This meant an investment of airfare, 2-night hotel stay and a rent-a-car on top of being unable to work for three days. I made my own glossary of Japanese/English based on the Spanish/English glossaries that I had received at the workshop. The test is to check overall English and Japanese ability, not so much legal terms. I passed the test.

I applied for the oral test. I was wondering how I could prepare myself for it. Then one day when I checked my P. O. Box, there was a letter from the National Court Reporters Association that had been mistakenly put in. It was addressed to some court reporter. I copied the contact number before I returned it to the post office. Then I asked NCRA to send me the tape that court reporter trainees practice with. I practiced consecutive and simultaneous interpreting using the tape. I had a hard time doing simultaneous interpreting for a 140 words/minute section full of legalese. Again I went to Los Angeles, and took a test. The results came back negative. I had failed.

I thought I would try just one more time. I couldn't justify my investment more than that, both in terms of time and money. So I applied for the oral test tak-

ing place last spring. I did better this time, and I received a letter of congratulations in June. I contacted the State of Michigan Court Administrative Office right away, and now I am a certified court interpreter in Michigan. Beside the fact that I like challenges and love tests, why did I take this exam investing so much money (a few thousand dollars) and time (again a few thousand dollars worth of my billable interpreting time)?

The longer I work in the field of translation and interpreting, the more strongly I feel the need to educate clients and the next generation of translators/interpreters. At least in the automotive industry, I feel I get enough respect and appreciation from my clients. However, in the court system, the profession of interpreting is not well understood or appreciated. Judges, prosecutors, administrators, and lawyers need to be educated much better in this area. I felt court interpreter certification was required at a minimum for me to be heard.

It just so happens that I have been interpreting for a criminal case since March. This case got really complicated because the state's Family Protective Services and Police hired two incompe-

tent interpreters in the beginning. Both the defendant and the victim were interpreted wrongly by them, and the defendant was charged with a much more serious crime and was convicted. Although the defendant's lawyers realized that the things got much worse due to bad interpreting, they were not confident enough to pursue this issue fully, and the judge also did not want to touch it. Those interpreters ruined this Japanese family's life, and nothing will be done to them because the majority of the people in the judicial system do not understand the mechanism of interpreting. I even appeared as an expert witness in this case, but what I could do was limited since I was also the defendant's interpreter. Justice was bent due to the innocent ignorance of the people involved at the court. I witnessed it, but I couldn't do much since I was too involved in this case.

Now, there are about 20 certified court interpreters in Michigan. It is impossible for such a limited number of interpreters to cover all of the cases, but what we should strive for is to stop the court from using unqualified interpreters. We should at least teach them to qualify interpreters.

I am a member of the Certified Court Interpreters of Michigan under the umbrella of MiTiN. We are working now to let the courts in Michigan know that we exist, and preparing an introductory presentation to educate the court and lawyers. Fortunately, the administrative office is helping us. This will take time, but it has to be done, and it will be done.

Izumi Suzuki is an interpreter and a translator, ATA-accredited in both directions between Japanese and English. Izumi and her husband Steve Myers operate Suzuki-Myers Associates, Ltd. in Novi, Michigan. Izumi was a member of the board of directors of the ATA, and is the Administrator of the Japanese Language Division.



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Come to Phoenix!

The 44th Annual Conference will be held at Pointe South Mountain Resort in Phoenix, Arizona from November 5-8, 2003. The JLD is planning several events during the conference:

Wednesday, November 5: Informal Gathering (after the Welcome Reception)

Thursday, November 6: JLD Business Meeting (the first session in the afternoon)

Friday, November 7: JLD Dinner (at 7:30pm at Aunt Chillada's)*

Saturday, Nov. 8: JLD Forum (the last session)

* Aunt Chillada's is a Mexican restaurant on the hotel property, so we won't have



to worry about transportation. You need to make a reservation and send in a check (or charge your card) to Headquarters. It is \$22 per person, tax and gratuity inclusive.