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Court reporting museum launched on LI

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Photo credit: James Carbone | Dom Tursi, founder of the Gallery of Shorthand, at the federal court in Central Islip shows the first ever shorthand machine. (Feb. 14, 2011)



Shorthand machines on display at the the museum at federal court in Central Islip, founded by Dom Tursi. (Feb. 14, 2011) Photo Credit: Photo by James Carbone



Dom Tursi, founder of museum at federal court in Central Islip, gives a tour to Lang Dampha. (Feb. 14, 2011) Photo Credit: Photo by James Carbone

If a tree fell in the forest and Dominick Tursi were there, the whole world probably would know about it quickly, accurately and in great detail.

Tursi, 66, of Northport, a veteran federal and county court reporter, admits that recording courtroom events has been his profession, love and, frankly, his obsession for almost 50 years.

Tursi is now sharing his fondness for court reporting and stenography with the public in a mini-museum he developed in the federal courthouse in Central Islip.

The "Gallery of Shorthand," which he developed with the permission of federal judges and court administrators, is believed to be one of the only museums in the world devoted to shorthand and court reporting.

The gallery packs into a few hundred square feet the history of not only court reporting and the rapid recording of events, but also the development of the written alphabet and its evolution and compression into shorthand systems.

The exhibition includes 30 of Tursi's personal stenographic machines tracing the evolution of the devices from the earliest models in the 19th century to modern computerized ones. The exhibition also includes a collection of rare books of Tursi's tracing the history of stenography.

Tursi said that when he was growing up in Brooklyn 49 years ago, he wanted to be a lawyer, but was told he "needed connections" to succeed, he said.

So Tursi said he took up what turned out not to be the next best thing, but his lifelong avocation, because "I found I was very good at it."

Tursi, a past president of the U.S. Court Reporters Association, once won a national speed championship by averaging 300 words per minute.

He stresses that as valuable as it is in court proceedings, stenography also is important in a number of other areas, such as documenting history.

The gallery also has exhibits on the work of the stenographer who recorded events in the room where Abraham Lincoln died, and by one of the key stenographers at the Nuremberg war-crimes trials.

The museum is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the lobby of the federal courthouse. There is no charge.

Tursi also is happy to give free tours of his life's work. They can be arranged through his office number: 631-712-6108 or by fax: 631-712-6124.