

OUR STORY

TALK TECHNOLOGIES

For three generations Stenomask has been made by the Webb family. Its' applications are more relevant today than ever before. It is the most accurate and private noise cancelling microphone available for speech recognition and private communications. It allows anyone to work and communicate freely, without having to worry about disturbing others or being overheard while simultaneously cancelling all ambient noise.

Stenomask was invented in a Chicago courtroom in the early 1940's. Its father was a pen shorthand reporter named Horace Webb and its mother was frustration. Horace had been writing shorthand in the courts for about two years but frequently ran into situations where some double-tongued lawyer or glib witness simply out talked him.

"There must be a faster, more accurate way to do this work."

Though not outwardly apparent, the strain on the reporter increases markedly and shorthand notes begin to disintegrate when the talking speed or terminology difficulty increases. Non-reporters assume the tough part of the reporter's job is over when the last shorthand note is written. Back in the day shorthand reporters typically dictated their notes for transcription into typewritten form, roughly two hours dictating for every hour spent in court.

Horace was struck with the thought: "Since the reporter repeats the entire proceeding with his voice when he dictates his shorthand notes, why not dictate them in the courtroom? Repeat each word into a microphone just as it is spoken! Repeat it with my voice instead of with a pen." The idea was born, and he was elated at the prospect.

Subsequent experiments proved that the reporter would have the "talking" speed to keep up with the fastest speaker, and there would be no need to re-dictate notes. Furthermore, the reporter would not have to spend years learning to write shorthand in the first place, and his "notes" could be transcribed now or later by a competent typist. All he needed was a simple device to "confine" or "silence" the voice so that others in the courtroom would not be disturbed.

After countless iterations involving microphones wired inside of coffee pots, cigar boxes and tomato cans patched together with a rubber mouth piece originally designed for the Air Force, Horace had a functioning Stenomask.

Years later Stenomask was eventually accepted and was deemed the most effective and accurate means of transcription by the US military and to this day is used in every US Naval courtroom in America. Horace is also directly responsible for an organization solely dedicated to it's uses, the NVRA- National Verbatim Reporters Association.

In 1990 Dr. Stephen Webb (Horace's son) took over Stenomask and incorporated it into Talk Technologies. Throughout the 90's and early 2000 Steve grew the business inventing smaller more

accurate Stenomasks (SmartMic and Sylencer models). Talk Technologies began expanding in to other applications such as simultaneous language translation and eventually speech recognition.

In 2015 the business was once again acquired by a Webb, this time it was to be Horace's grandson and Stephen's son Damon. In 2017 Talk Technologies released its 6th generation mask the Steno SR series.

Today voice is replacing touchscreens and keyboards as the digital user interface of choice. The big stumbling block however is the accuracy of current voice technologies in real world environments — commands get misinterpreted frequently due to background noise and the total lack of privacy that comes with voice. Due to these issues Talk Technologies and Stenomask are seeing growth from a wealth of areas including workers in open office situations, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, students, disability and assistive services and anyone that requires voice privacy and or noise cancellation at work or in public.

Link to the entire Horace Webb story <https://nvra.org/historical>

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