

Introduction

During the last millennium, my grandfather, Paul Gerard Smith, had a column named SMITHEREENS that ran in small local papers. As a successful screenwriter, director and playwright, SMITHEREENS was a nice platform for Grandpa to take a break and simply speak his mind. The columns were never serious and had no particular theme or agenda.

If you look around my family tree, you'll find several column writers on the Smith side. My great-grandfather, Carlton Smith, was the first syndicated columnist in America. In fact, you can follow the family tree all the way back to Ireland and find nothing but creative writers.

Well I certainly couldn't let my branch of the family tree grow without its own leaves, could I? Besides, I was a budding songwriter and my column served as a nice break from all the rhyming, syllables and rhythmic patterns built in creating a three-minute song.

I started where my grandpa left off, writing SMITHEREENS for my generation. I was quickly reminded, however, that there was a Rock 'N Roll band by the same name and it might behoove me to rename my wordily contributions. So I came up with JUST A THOUGHT because after all, that's all the column was about.

My column never made a big splash on the journalistic front. It ran in a few 'fish wrappers', as we writers like to call them, but editors of these small town papers are notorious for breaking the rhythm of a column by using them as 'fillers' which goes a long way in killing the continuity needed to develop a loyal following. But I was okay with that. Like my grandfather before me, my column was more of a break from the other, more serious projects that I was working on and I enjoyed every opportunity to sit down and spit out another edition of JUST A THOUGHT.

What I liked about my column is that it broke the standard rules of column writing in today's world. Any successful column writer is identified with a specific topic. Your column is about politics, family, sports, religion - your column has a specific voice that the reader can count on every day when they snap open their paper.

But I have never looked at people or life as one-dimensional. Diversity has always been the one element in this life that I celebrate the most. The more one-dimensional a person is, the less interested I am in dealing with them.

Sure, I could have written a column about fatherhood and probably done quite well. But why shelve all the great opinions I have about sports, religion, politics and nothing in particular? The schooled journalist would say that my column doesn't have a voice and that is why it is not successful. I say it does have a voice - MY voice - and I will use that voice for whatever random thoughts I may be having at the time, thank you very much.

So whether I'm trying to figure out how pioneers got by without alarm clocks or comparing a Jimmi Hendrix concert to taking my kid to the doctors, solving the problems of elections or simply changing a washer in the shower, my column had a voice - my voice - and I was always happy to share it with anyone who happened to come by. It was never intended to change the world or make any great impact. It was simply meant to be: JUST A THOUGHT.

The author