

'Spin docta' can provide some healing

There were just the two of us. In a small airless, windowless upstairs room. Loud chattering sounds echoed off the walls and glass partitions. It was hot. Smokey. Crowded. We eyed each other warily. Sam made the first move. "I will no longer do this. It is beneath my dignity."

Sam was the swing shift DJ at our very small town radio station. Local wags noted its reach was three city blocks in every direction. This was not far from the truth of the matter. As the owner said, admiringly, 'Sam has a voice and a face made for radio.' Sam was bald on top and sported a long curly red fringe of hair that always reminded me of Bozo the Clown. He wore stripes and plaids. His radio voice was deep and sonorous. This came from a three packs of unfiltered Lucky Strikes a day habit. I was a very part-time station "radio assistant" charged with feeding paper into the busy clattering Telex machine, updating the weather, finding the latest Ag news and sweeping the floors and cleaning the glass partitions. Sam held court in a closed glass booth with a large microphone floating in front of this nose. On his left was a double record player. A

ANYONE CAN WRITE

Nearly 40 years in the business have taught me that readers long for meaning and a connection at a deeper and more universal level. And that's why the East Oregonian will be running, from time to time, stories from students who are in my writing class, which I've been teaching for the past 10 years in Portland. I take great satisfaction in helping so-called nonwriters find and write stories from their lives and experiences. They walk into my room believing they don't have what it takes to be a writer. I remind them if they follow their

hearts, they will discover they are storytellers. As we all are at our core. Some of these stories have nothing to do with Pendleton or Umatilla County. They do, however, have everything to do with life. If you are interested in contacting me to tell me your story, I'd like to hear from you.

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thin spindle for 33½ albums and a thick spindle for the 45s. On his right was the studio's collection of records. Lots of records. The range was impressive. Classical to country to Lawrence Welk to the Beatles. Sam would play his music and read out advertising, jokes, the weather and local gossip on the fly. Always. I secretly wanted to learn that gift of gab. I soon had my chance. Unexpectedly.

The boss decreed that the station would host a once weekly "Music Dedication Hour" during the summer. The kids were out of school and would need a wholesome distraction. Local students would mail or hand deliver a written request that a certain song be played along with a personal message or dedica-

tion. By way of example, the boss envisioned that "Tiny Bubbles" would be dedicated to a favorite teacher by an adoring student. Pure G Rated fare. "Fat chance" muttered Sam under his smelly breath.

Sam was tasked with adding this show to his evening routine. This did not go over well. I worked the night shift during the weekly Dedication Hour. Sam was inside his glass control booth. Smoking up a storm. At the end of the second Dedication week is where I found Sam on the verge of quitting. After the "beneath my dignity" mutterings, Sam looked at me for a moment. He quickly turned all friendly-like, put his nicotine stained fingers around my shoulder. "I have a great idea

Jonsson. You are only here doing scout work so that you can learn to be a DJ. Now is your chance! You will be the on-air host for the weekly Dedication Hour. I can sell this to the boss easy. He will pay your paltry wage, save money and give me time to work on my other shows". That's what happened. I had a week to prepare my on-air persona and debut.

First, I needed a DJ handle. Wolfman Jack, Casey Kasem and Murray the K ruled the airwaves. With little forethought, I christened myself "The Spin Docta." Sam rolled his eyes and muttered, "Saints preserve us from the young and ill-prepared." I had others lined up in case I caught a lucky break and made it on the air. Alas, the

cold light of day diminished their luster. "Rock God," Music Master and Purgatories Devil were filed away. Forever.

Next, I had to read the dedications and put the songs in the correct order. The songs were the easy part. The dedications were a total surprise and a serious challenge in how to handle the swirling cauldron of teen hormones, lust and vindictiveness. The requests began to arrive. I was ill prepared. The Tiny Bubbles requests never arrived. Here are some that did. I noted that song titles wrote their own dedications ...

"I Can't Take My Eyes Off You." To Carol, please show some skin! — Shy guy.

"Happy Together." To Chuck, from your mistress.

"Midnight Confessions." To Fred, I love your younger brother. — Sneaky.

"Only the Lonely." To Shirley, please notice me in 1st period math. — Lonely one.

"Hello Darlin'." To Bill, who was with you at midnight? — Honey.

"I'm A Girl Watcher." To Mary, I have my eyes on you at lunch time. — Four eyes.

"Piece of my Heart." To Rob, give it back. I have the rest! — Lady it's so over.

"Kiss an Angel in the

Mornin'." To Foxy, great kiss last night. — Lover Boy.

"Light My Fire." Ed, the kindling and matches are in my car. — Your Girl Scout.

"The Letter." Rick, go to your mailbox. A letter to 'Dear John' is there. — Cowardly Lioness.

"I Walk Alone." To Jay, I couldn't care less. — Your new ex.

Flummoxed, I asked Sam for advice. The committed bachelor said, "Pause when agitated. Be kind." He showed me an early request by way of example: Play "Mrs. Robinson." Dedicated to Barb, I hope you drop dead" — Art Garfunkle." He changed it to "To Barb from Art." Seemed easy enough.

He added an unexpected lesson in time management. He noted there were more requests than time to play the songs, run our ads and listen to my simpering patter. Cull the really bad ones and announce requests had to be renewed again if a song did not play. This would give time to cool hot-running emotions. Finally, make some up requests that are positive, uplifting and kind.

"After all," he said, "you are the Spin Docta, and your prescriptions may heal many lonely kids out there."

"Tiny Bubbles" may be just the tonic someone needs.

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