

(Excerpt)

NEWS FROM HOME

Shepard Smith's Mississippi twang is now heard 'round the world on Fox News Channel

Working for Fox News allows Smith the freedom to be himself on the air, something he is grateful for. His unique delivery is a mix of folksy charm and big city speed. Smith gives each story individual attention, peppering his newscasts with quirky phrases and amused grins. If you listen closely, you can sometimes catch a Southern drawl. The guy from Mississippi known as "Shep" is arguably one of the most colorful journalists on television today, leading the industry trade magazine *Electronic Media* to dub him the "anchorman of tomorrow."

Growing up in a culture rich with storytellers has given Smith a natural ability to relate to people. "We tell stories in Mississippi. The same is true with journalism. You tell stories, and you just have to find the best way of telling them. I don't work from scripts, because I never learned how to write a script."

Smith can be described as self-assured, introspective, warm, and diligent. Yet the most accurate label might be that he is a sincerely nice guy. One news editor says Smith is the first person to ask how things are going with you. In the newsroom, the makeup chair, or on the set, you might find him asking about a colleague's children or inquiring about a sick relative. Certainly, Smith exemplifies the unique Mississippi character he has come in appropriate in his travels around the country. "Mississippians are great people from a great place, who are more grounded than anyone I've ever met," he says.

Smith's modest, aw-shucks demeanor hides a serious and intelligent reporter who has covered such major national news stories as the Columbine shootings, President Clinton's impeachment trial, and the September 11 terrorist attacks. He was also a witness to the execution of Timothy McVeigh, something he describes as subdued as compared to the emotion at the Alfred P. Murrah Building shortly after the bombing.

Though it is impossible to say what the future holds for Smith, it's safe to say he is headed for a bright tomorrow. And wherever his career takes him, Mississippi will always be in his heart. "You are made in Mississippi," he says. "It's always a place I'll want to go back to. I think I'm better off because I am from there."