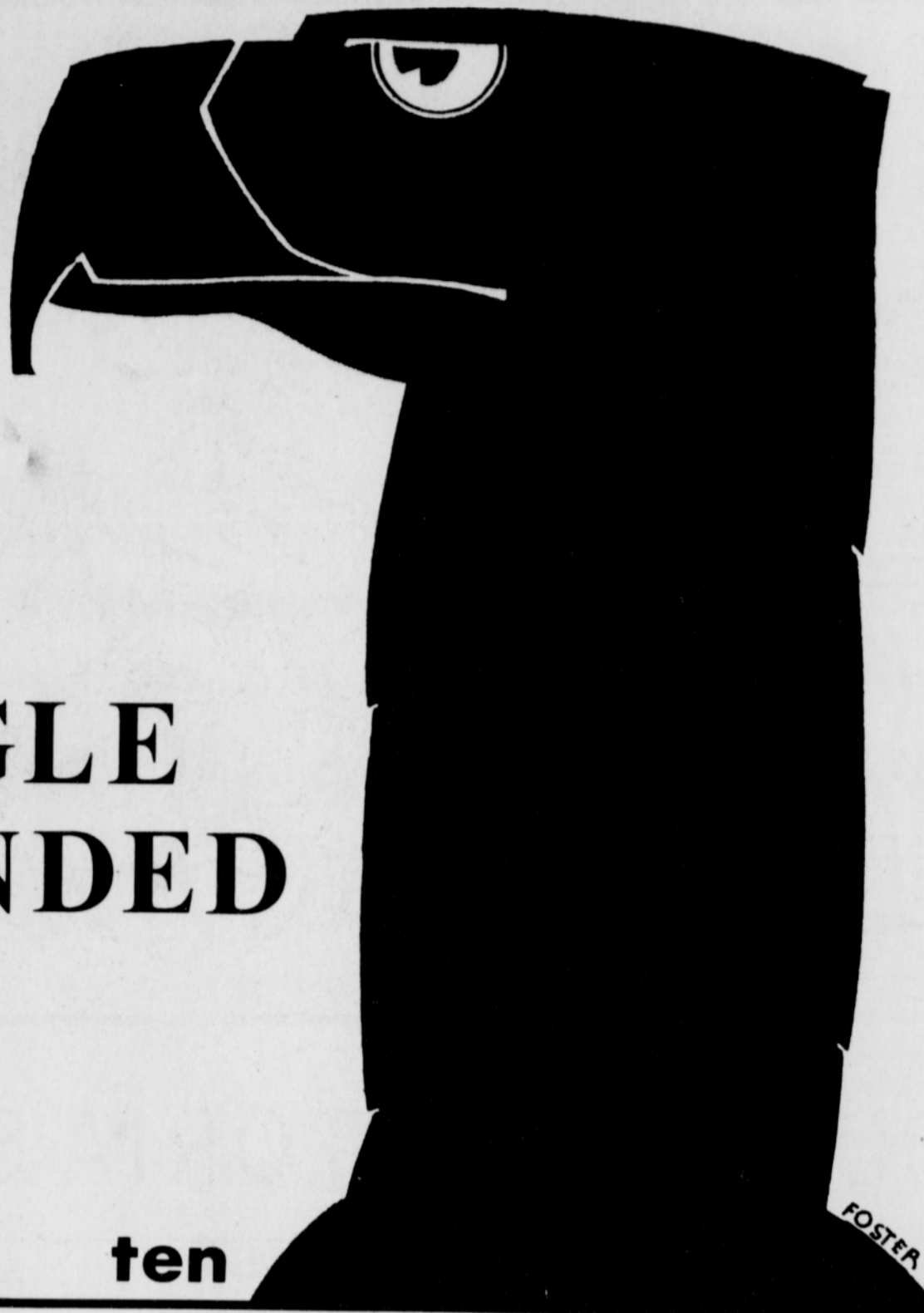


THE
NORTH
COAST

VOLUME 1
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TIMES
EAGLE

JULY 1989



THE EAGLE
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In a dark time the eye begins to see.
— Theodore Roethke

by Michael Paul McCusker

I tried to bring the instincts of a scholar to the service of journalism; to take nothing for granted; to turn journalism into literature; to provide radical analysis with a conscientious concern for accuracy; and in studying the current scene to do my very best to preserve human values and free institutions."

— I. F. Stone, 1907-1989

Twenty years ago Americans rode an Eagle to the moon. Ten years later, when gas shortages made it difficult to get home from work, another Eagle popped out of a crypt and declared itself reborn.

July 20, 1989 is the tenth anniversary of the Born Again Bird, ten years to the day an American astronaut said that his walk on the moon was a small step for a man but a giant step for mankind. The resurrected Eagle reawakened into a desolate world of its own. Instead of lifeless it swarmed with billions of busy ambitious creatures, though at least half were starving or underfed. Millions of others were killing each other or planned to. A few impoverished the many. The planet was despoiled for short-term profit and pleasure. Truth, as usual, was a first casualty.

The North Coast Times Eagle is born again, its first editorial proclaimed, "because First Amendment newspapers have become as rare as the nation's symbol, the Bald Eagle. The independent press has virtually disappeared, homogenized into the huge corporations that control the country and probably the world. . . . In this age of the great systems devotion to any principle other than the status quo seems quaint and naive, and faintly dangerous. . . (but) the enormous pressures of population and economics threaten the way we live. The great

contradictions between freedom and property have finally reached us. . . . Like everything else the role of the press is in question. There should be no doubt. The press should have no other special interest than the First Amendment. This becomes patently impossible when the press is controlled by corporations whose interests are often in conflict with the Constitution. The great renegade journalist A. J. Leibling once said that the press was free only to those who owned one."

The editor and publisher of the original North Coast Times Eagle was an orphan of French descent, Robert Stanley Need, who had been so annoyed by the corruption of his Air Force superiors in Viet Nam that he quit the service after almost twenty years. His purpose was to be a roaring mouse challenging the Philistine mainstream press that he considered false and cowardly. For five lean and stormy years he published a feisty, rashly eccentric newspaper patterned in style and design after the small independent newspapers of the 19th century. He employed about two hundred kindred and generally unpaid spirits who stayed as long as they could endure hunger and Mr. Need's napoleonic nature. Eventually the Original Bird collapsed, always in debt and under fire from the coastal established order. Mr. Need exhausted himself and his resources ingeniously, often brilliantly, to save his newspaper from ruin, but he also exhausted the patience of his staff and the finances necessary to keep the Eagle aloft. At the end he was betrayed by a friend he had asked to save the paper. The new publisher quickly got rid of Mr. Need, gutted what was left of the dying bird, stole what he could — which included a few thousand dollars of donations — and fled to Idaho.

I was the next to last editor of the original NCTE. I slept on the floor of the newspaper

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DRAWING BY ROBERT FOSTER (1929)
CALLIGRAPHY BY SHAY WILLIAMS