



WM. MICHAEL SCHUSTER, 'CAROL' (1980)

I last saw him a couple of weeks after he had been deposed. He was leaving Oregon that day and going back home to Norfolk, Virginia. He said his nerves were shot and he looked frazzled and downcast as a chewed chicken wing. A woman I knew gave him a ride to the Washington side of the Columbia River. He gave her a dollar for my back wages, hitchhiked to Seattle and rode a train back east. A friend from Nehalem visited a few years ago and reported to me that Need had made a success of publishing another newspaper. I suspect that if it is successful it bears little resemblance to "The distinctive and unique journal of the Oregon coast," a slogan he emblazoned on the face of every *Times Eagle*.

The paper did not last long after his departure. The new publisher picked it clean and abandoned it after ruining its reputation. "At the end, in March 1976, the *North Coast Times Eagle* was a ghost, hunted by its creditors in the streets of what once were its own cities," John MacCormack wrote in *Death of the Screaming Eagle*. "The corporeal body, a few crates of hastily packed files and decrepit equipment lay in ignominious cold storage in Manzanita, its final place of rest. Why the paper failed is a question that screams with possibilities. It started with a suicidally inadequate financial base and quickly alienated what little advertising existed along a poverty stricken stretch of Highway 101. But the deeper question is whether a newspaper that maintains an unbridled editorial voice and exploits fully its First Amendment rights to freedom of the press, as the *Times Eagle* undeniably did, can still survive in modern America without being as large, well exconced and unassailable as *The New York Times*." (MacCormack's epitaph for the NCTE began a new set of publishing tombstones. *One Dollar Magazine* in Portland folded soon after printing it in the summer of 1976, and a magazine in Eugene that carried *One Dollar's* eulogy soon died. It became a curse in northwest publishing to pay tribute to a fallen press.)

The *Times Eagle* lay dead for three years and almost all evidence of its former existence was burned, bulldozed, lost, buried in libraries, forgotten in basements or, in the case of its former staff, scattered across the country and around the world. Its death was unmourned by many, particularly those who dealt with it financially. Perhaps also a few public officials and others who were treated critically in its pages were pleased by its demise. But here and there along the coast and tucked into the mountains were pockets of a contrary view, people who missed the paper and wished something like it would start up again.

I revived the *Times Eagle* after it had lain in a crypt for three years. I thought it had died prematurely, like a murdered child. Its restless ghost caught up with me on the island of Guam and snapped me back to Oregon like an overstretched umbilical cord. I printed the first issue of the Born Again Bird on the tenth anniversary of humanity's walk on the moon, July 20, 1979.

I wrote in the flamboyant opening lines of the resurrection manifesto of Vol. 1, No. 1:

The only corpse successfully revived in recorded history was that of Lazarus, who was said to have lived for several years afterward. Jesus Christ is reported to have arisen from the dead but even the most ardent supporters of his resurrection admit he was back on Earth only 40 days; and Jonah was still alive when the whale spit him ashore. Countless other claims of

resurrection or rebirth have been made, not least among them Count Dracula and Richard Nixon. With such inspired precedent, the North Coast Times Eagle is born again.

The Born Again Bird was resurrected from its grave, I wrote in its first manifesto,

...because First Amendment newspapers have become as rare as the nation's symbol, the Bald Eagle. The independent press has virtually disappeared 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 special interest than the First Amendment. This (is) 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 the press was free only to those who owned one.

Small esoteric newspapers such as the *Times Eagle* (also KMUN and KBOO) defy the momentum toward megabig, yet a significant trend in media traffic is paradoxically toward specific, or more ominously, specialized audiences. Mainstreaming more often seems to mean segmenting into selective user groups that become hermetically sealed by appropriate media. The *Times Eagle* is a raggedy-ann example of micromedia, not at all custom tailored, instead an off-the-rack rag that adheres to broad principles, which as a result limits its readership.

Small impoverished newspapers such as this one dwell in local obscurity. They are often in not particularly gentle opposition to the bland or autocratic community rule and standards of their circulation areas. The fringe is most normally their habitat, from which they operate happily however bitter their goals or from despair their momentum. They incubate and hope to hatch ideas or ideologies that captivate or hold them captive. Controversy, flirtation with original ideas or any other form of media experimentation (aside from the purely technical) is anathema to megamedia, which consolidates immense energy and talent to hype the salacious, mendacious and indigestible. Commercial media exists to make money. Micromedia is always looking for a buck so it can publish or broadcast.

It is myopic to suggest, as megamedia consistently claims, that only mainstream approaches to problems that criti-

cally affect society should be considered. The common ground (which is not represented by the mainstream media) is certainly a forum at which extremes meet and seek agreement, but the more specific audience ought not to be ignored. It is just such esoteric publications, left or right, shrill or reasonable, which keep the self-styled mainstream media on a somewhat honest course and not entirely blown about by its commercial interests.

The *Times Eagle*, reborn from three years in a crypt, now resurrected 17 years, lean, hungry, improvident and half alive since breaking out of its tomb, might be considered a forum for impractical, perhaps stoneage dreams of a less painful future than prophesied by old grim myths, a torchbearer for an ancient concept of personal freedom coequal with community responsibility, in history only a dream but its most persistent dream. I wrote in commemoration of the Born Again Bird's tenth anniversary, which was double the lifetime of its original incarnation:

The NCTE is a member of the Poverty Press. It is one of a few small presses obsessed with a vision unaffected by commerce. It is descended from radical newspapers that blossomed briefly (and) its lineage threads back to the prickly press that fostered the First Amendment, which denies government or anyone else the right to interfere with freedom of speech. The independent advocacy press has few pretensions toward objectivity and fewer illusions about its probability. Most small independent journals are chronically understaffed, underfunded and generally misunderstood because they seldom reflect popular opinion. They act, often myopically and insensitively, as consciences and torchbearers, and most are fierce and shrill advocates of large or esoteric causes. They are usually on hard times and fail more often than they are replaced.

Yet even in America, which worships the colossal, and despite media merger mania, (also from the 10th birthday ode) *The very small can grow and relatively prosper inbetween the cracks and shadows of the Mega-big, like ferns on a forest floor. Mouses must roar, after all, and bite at the ankles of ponderous tyrannies if we are to keep our heads and humor. Micromedia, flamboyant, irreverent, raffish and patched, is on the march into the 21st century.*

Robert Stanley Need and I publish very different newspapers, though the lineage is recognizable. He might be upset at my evolution of his creation yet our purpose has been the same — to exercise the First Amendment like a muscle, to push at it and goad it, to not allow it to slip into Alzheimer's through apathy or neglect, and to slap away the hands that wish to strangle it.

Alexis de Toqueville wrote about American journalism, "If one wishes to know the real power of the press, one should pay attention, not to what it says, but to the way in which it is listened to....It only cries so loud because its audience is becoming deaf."

NATURE PAPER

Hi it's the first day of *Nature Paper*! My name is Margit and in this issue of *Nature Paper* you're reading about rainforests and ways we can help them.

Rainforests are a home to many animals....

If you want to help save the rainforests (or other stuff) go to the Wildlife Club and the leader might let you be a member! To be a member you have to go in the spider cage. And I should tell you this, none of the spiders are poisonous and the spider cage is big enough for one person at a time.

Lots of people are trying to save the rainforests. But lots of people are trying to get rid of the rainforests too. But if you were a gecko and bulldozers were coming your way what would you do?

Rainforests are a great place to study animals. Can you believe people travel far and wide just to look at tropical rainforests! Rainforests are very pretty. But they are very rainy too. And it's a good thing too, for if it didn't rain then what would become of the beautiful flowers?

~MARGIT BOWLER
THE NATURE PAPER
(VOL. 1, NO. 1)

Six year old Margit Bowler is editor, publisher and writer of the *Nature Paper*. She lives in Astoria and attends Star of the Sea School.

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