

yet deserve to be celebrated for their personal and aggregate commitment to the obligations they recognize their unalienable rights to be.

The *Times Eagle* and other out on the fringe publications struggle zealously to survive in this age of media titans. The resurrected *Eagle*, reborn from three years in a crypt, lean, usually malnourished, improvident and half-alive since breaking out of its tomb, is hogtied by its own paradox of self-imposed poverty, which caused its original demise. Radically inclined, its vows of penury dovetail with probability and implicitly limit financial contact with ideologically incorrect sources of wealth and funding that spread the diseased creed of commercialized consumer/consumption. Naked appeals for money to readers are embarrassing but necessary. Public radio and TV stations, as well as smaller independent listener-sponsored stations *KMUN* and Portland's *KBOO*, raise capital by on-air pledge drives a few times each year (plus financial grants, underwriting and other subsidies). ** Small potatoes newspapers take their begging bowls out on the street like hungry monks or organize parties with music, poetry, food and liquids, and pass the hat among fans, sympathizers and rubbernecks who flounder through the door.***

Our quickly consumerable society takes its momentum more from waste than production much like emphysema inspires the lungs by excess CO₂ rather than oxygen. Whatever might be said of the *Times Eagle* (which many call the *Eagle Times*) in its favor or disgrace, it is not quickly consumed unless hurled into a fire. Bucking a trend toward nanoprint journalism, *Times Eagle* articles are long and wordy, often almost essay length, and require time and concentration, which is sure-death in an immediate gratification/disposal market. Newspapers by their nature are perishable, read once and disposed of, but reading demands active mental involvement unlike passive potato television. Journalism comes in as many forms as music, high and lowbrow, elegant and classy, pop-schmaltzy, hot and jazzy. Its purpose is an almanac of events but also to pierce veils that spiderweb thought, imagination and ideology.

From an ode I wrote for the *Times Eagle's* tenth birthday in 1989, which was double the lifetime of the Old Bird:

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.

Free speech isn't free — it has an underlying cost: which is that everyone of us must do what we can to keep speech free. Sometimes that costs money — such as maintaining a little David of a newspaper struggling to maintain First Amendment rights among mainstream Goliaths who are generally shameless in their singleminded goal of making money, which includes trampling over free speech and its necessary offsprings of debate and controversy.

Peter Smith, editor/publisher of the *Bay City Slug* ("Tough, Absorbent, Disposable") once wrote that the *Eagle* and *Slug* were brethren. This was in an 1995 article in which he profiled four Oregon coast alternative newspapers. The papers were *The Upper Left Edge* of Cannon Beach, at present on recess; *Bummers & Gummars* of Lorane, which is back in print after a four year hiatus; his own *Bay City Slug*, never out of print; and the *Times Eagle*, of which he wrote about the Born Again Bird's 15th birthday:

Liberal illustrated with drawings by local artists, the 15th anniversary issue included articles on social diseases, including AIDS, deadly herbicides used to control undergrowth following forest clearcutting, spotted owl and Clinton Forest Plan, logging and the destruction of salmon spawning beds, The Great Pacific Maritime Strike of 1934 in San Francisco, known as "Bloody Thursday," plus one page of poetry and several pages of photographs (by Robert C. Wilson). As with most issues of the North Coast Times Eagle, this one was written and designed to annoy corporate America and bring to view some little known labor history.

"I was also a USMC reporter/photographer in Vietnam, which critically exposed me to the formula of policy over truth; and I suppose my obsession with fringe publications is an effort to atone for the untruths I helped disseminate regarding the conduct of a very unpopular and unjustified war. If for nothing more, I owe uncompromising search for the truth to the dead who are unable to speak.

** *KMUN* holds its summer pledge drive August 2-15.
***The *Times Eagle* has recently been the recipient of a lifetime grant from a donor who prefers to remain anonymous and who stipulates the paper continue to receive her bequest as long as it continues publication, even beyond her death.



WILLIAM MICHAEL SCHUSTER, 'CAROL' (1980)

Smith also wrote in that same article:
The day the first press is confiscated or the first publisher of an alternative publication is branded a terrorist and jailed for national security reasons, the mainstream media will have to wake up. Though corporate owners of the print media might try and ignore the event, I'm certain reporters and journalists who work for these monstrosities of misinformation will sound the alarm. Should they fail in their sacred duty the alternative press will become the underground press, and we will have returned to the black days before the American Revolution.

In spite of these ominous tidings...as long as the mainstream press doesn't do its job, the alternative press will, come what may. Considering the present state of the mainstream press, the alternative press will continue to grow and be with you — in one form or another — well into the 21st century.

The mainstream media is no longer a corrective to the corruption and malfeasance of government and its evil axis of wealth and power — it acts as its proselytizer, the conduit by which the government boilerplates its actions to the public, and despite a few recent qualms of conscience, has generally acted as a cheering squad, or perhaps more accurately, as a militarized propaganda platoon.

The continuity of a culture of so-called radical journalism is essential, which journalism schools seem to be breeding out of recent generations of young journalists in a quest for centrist, or "objective" principles of news and commentary. It is extremely important for widely divergent views of everything have public conduits — and the very edgy on-the-edge media is just about all that persists against the conformitization of American media and society.

The paradox, of course, is that fringe media is readily dismissed as not only being outside of mainstream centrist conformity but also that it preaches to the fringe, and the great masses of Americans (of whom less than half generally vote) seldom read, watch or listen to heretic or apostate media — yet the choir must be kept up with trends of music as medical people the light-speed changes in medicine. When what is

considered a mainstream source of information becomes increasingly more like Goebbels-speak (Fox TV news for example), the fringe media has to pick up the slack of the quickly disintegrating First Amendment.

Robert Stanley Need and I publish very different newspapers, although 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 hands that wish to strangle it. The First Amendment is a journalist's only god — Amen!

A final quip from the Born Again Bird's decennial:
Printing an unprofitable newspaper of limited interest and circulation at the beginning of a post-literate era can be frustrating and perhaps only slightly justified because it comes from the heart. The NCTE has yet to break even on a single issue, a now (25) year record which surely must be worth a category in 'Guineas'. But enough of money. It's the Eagle's blood, not its heart. Profit and loss are mechanical processes, like digestion. What matters is if the Born Again Bird (et al) is not simply wasting paper. As the first editorial suggested...it seems quaint to produce a small impoverished publication at a time when vast political/military/corporate systems imprint their oppressive agendas upon billions. But Moses Asch, who founded Folkway Records on a shoestring and seldom made a dime in 40 years, realized long ago that the very small can grow and relatively prosper inbetween the cracks of the megabig, 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.

This 25th anniversary birthday card to the reborn Times Eagle is a smorgasborg of persistent efforts to compile a cogent and lucid history of its bifurcated life.

'THE GOAL IS TO CONTINUE'

BY DAN ARMSTRONG

A few attempts have been made to attain grants for the Times Eagle. All failed. Dan Armstrong made a valiant try to answer questions of one grant form, with much less boilerplate than most applicants. His answers have been consolidated into a single text.

The *North Coast Times Eagle* presents itself to the people of the North Oregon Coast as an instrument through which their separate and collective voices, irrespective of creed, color, political bent or age may speak out in determination of their own future.

Robert Stanley Need was the first editor and publisher of the *North Coast Times Eagle*. He maintained the publication for five years (1971-1976). Between 1976 and 1979, the *NCTE* languished for lack of funds and Mr. Need's inspiration. The paper was resurrected July 20, 1979 by Michael Paul McCusker, a writer and editor for the original. Though times and issues have changed, (25) years later Mr. McCusker remains at the helm, upholding Robert Need's original concept of the paper's purpose, "because First Amendment newspapers have become as rare as the nation's symbol, the Bald Eagle" (from MPMc's first editorial).

The *North Coast Times Eagle* has dedicated itself to maintaining an independent voice in a society of increasingly dependent media voices. Its ongoing work is to address social, political, environmental and human issues in both the North Coast community and the nation at large. Its material (social/political commentary, poetry, short fiction, photography and graphic art) is drawn largely from local writers and artists (ranging from grade schoolers to professionals to octogenarians) but also includes reprinted essays taken from regional and national publications. Though topics often touch issues of national or even global concern, the central premise of the publication is to reach the North Coast community and expand the awareness of the problems and issues faced in this region. Throughout the years the primary achievement of the *NCTE* has been to provide both a long standing open forum of ideas and artwork for local artists, writers or anyone who has an opinion to express, and an interactive bulletin board for community organization.

The *North Coast Times Eagle* is dedicated to social change and always has been. Its articles invariably center

upon the debate of social change, whether it be labor unions, education, environmental degradation or gender awareness. The *NCTE* offers in-depth articles and commentary where local syndicated publications simply pull stories from the AP wire and advertise. Artistically, the *NCTE* offers its readers a wide range of artwork, poetry, short fiction and political insight...The *NCTE* is very much an educational, literary newsletter, (a) citizen level independent publication that allows noncommercial public initiative and organization. Unequivocally, the *NCTE's* gain is the community's gain.

The *North Coast Times Eagle's* editorial goal, essentially unchanged through (25) years of publication, is to continue to provide a thought-provoking, yet also community oriented, topical newspaper of quality and wide sentiment. Infusion of grant funds would enable the *NCTE* to push for higher quality, increase its readership and enhance its reputation as Oregon's oldest alternative newspaper. As it is, the *NCTE* persists through modest advertisement income, intermittent donations, benefit socials that combine music, dancing and food that are usually attended by families as well as singles — and the formidable obsession to publish by its editor.

The *North Coast Times Eagle*, through hell or high water, accomplishes its goals by sustaining. Any money awarded this publication will go to securing and expanding the circulation of a critical umbilical for grassroots organization and an unfettered mouthpiece for local issues that is already in place and performing. The *NCTE* has done what no other independent publication has done in this state. That is, persist through difficult times. The *NCTE's* objectives are accomplished as long as it continues to go to press.

The issues of racism, sexism, homophobia and classism as obstacles to social evolution have been targets of the *North Coast Times Eagle* since its inception. Any single issue of the *NCTE* in any year exemplifies this.

In a world of increasingly large voices and megamedia, the *NCTE* is fundamentally committed to giving all voices, especially the small and less heard, a place to express their ideas. The goal is to continue to do this.

Dan Armstrong has been a contributor to the NCTE for many years although moving to Eugene has interrupted his flow. His last feature was in the May 2003 issue, "The Real Deal" exposing the corruption behind Enron.



PHOTO OF PAUL JACKSON BY J. PIERCE CHRISTI (1991)