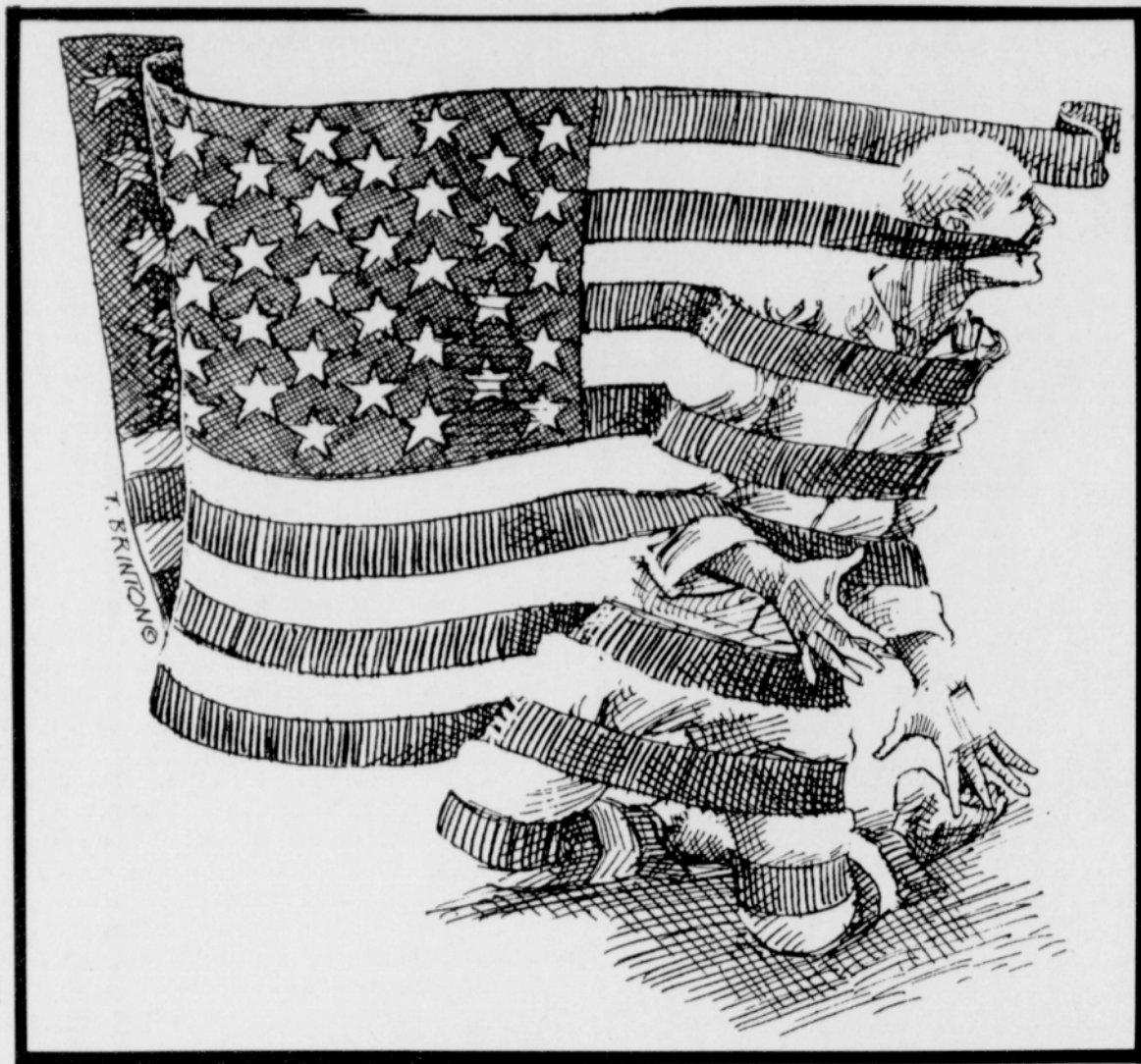


TERRY BLEVINS: '...I'VE JOINED THE OLD MEN'

ROBERT STANLEY NEED & THE NORTH COAST TIMES EAGLE



TIM BRINTON

"The North Coast Times Eagle...addressed itself to matters of life and death, to the affairs of humans. It was concerned with survival at the gut level and its hourly confrontations with the universe gave it a better perspective than any other newspaper I will ever enjoy. The Times Eagle was the only newspaper I had ever seen, or have seen since, that took the side of Man against the evil forces of Mankind."

~TERRY BLEVINS (1976)

Thirty-two years ago, I fled the Oregon coast, dejected, disillusioned and in abject poverty. I had closed a six or seven month career as an in-your-face liberal journalist; I had wandered the countryside, living in a bread truck; I had watched the greatest experiment of my experience crumble into disarray; I had seen the most unusual man I'd ever known slip out of town, never to return, with his life's dream sucked into that black hole of nothingness, "the land of opportunity."

In his relaxed moments, he was David Louis Gentier, Renaissance man: author of a couple of unpublished novels, performer of classical compositions on the baby grand piano that occupied 90% of his living room, master chef of authentic French cuisine, connoisseur of good wines — and most of all: charismatic and charming raconteur.

But in his active mode, he was Robert Stanley Need, founder and publisher of the North Coast Times Eagle, the feisty,

liberal and environment-friendly newspaper published, in those days, from Wheeler, Oregon.

Bob Need loved the organization and camaraderie he found during his military service, and he loved the United States of America and the principles it was founded upon. Like so many others, Bob lost his innocence when he was sent to Southeast Asia.

In Vietnam, it was Bob's job to provide information about the war to American news media; he was shocked to learn that, not only was he *not* expected to provide truthful information, he was actually expected to do the opposite! Information that supported American's intervention in Vietnam — information that portrayed U.S. forces as triumphant and the Viet Cong on the run...this was the information Bob was supposed to provide.

Finding the two great loves of his life in conflict in Vietnam, Bob Need's psyche was left in a permanent state of anguish. He vowed one day to publish a newspaper that told the TRUTH! Thus, the North Coast Times Eagle was born.

Bob had his forum, and he told the truth as he saw it, but Bob Need wasn't satisfied with the opportunity to expose his readers to his truth. He beat his truth at them in a strident and imperial manner. He beat his truth into them with a club. He pinched their noses and poured his raw, acidic truth down their throats. Some readers liked it that way; more of them did not. And as the readers turned away from the North Coast Times

Eagle in pain and outrage, the advertisers turned as well, giving their money to the Tillamook Headlight Herald or to the Seaside Signal.

"Let them go," Bob decreed, and he scoured the earth for "angels," people who loved the North Coast Times Eagle and were willing to donate money. He actually found a few, some donating a handful of silver dollars, others donating much more. Unfortunately, the greatest angel of them all died before he could write the check.

In the early 1970s, anyone looking for unrestrained idealism had to look no further than Wheeler, Oregon. Dozens of people, mostly younger than 30, joined the North Coast Times Eagle family over the first half of that decade. Their looks, their creeds, their backgrounds, their circumstances didn't matter. Bob Need would take one look, wave his finger like a magic wand, and "presto, chango," the young idealist became a reporter, or an ad salesperson, or a typesetter, or a circulation manager... whatever was needed. I showed up on the front steps out of curiosity, but when Bob discovered I actually had worked at newspapers before, he waved his finger and "presto, chango", I became executive editor of the North Coast Times Eagle!

Bob always claimed he was raising money for the "three Ps: People, Printing & Postage...and not necessarily in that order." For the most part, we all agreed with that premise, and we gave the job everything we had until hunger and homelessness changed our minds. Some lasted a month or two. I was somewhere inbetween.

After I fell off the bandwagon, I wandered off in the borrowed bread truck. For a brief time, a group of Times Eagle alumni hunkered down in a commune-like setting near Portland, but ultimately, I rejoined the mainstream press family. I moved to eastern Colorado, settled in a town of 850 people where wheat is king and a tree is a pleasant surprise, and became editor of another weekly paper. Thirty years ago, The Denver Post asked me, "What is a radical like you doing in Hugo, Colorado?"

Well, for one thing, I retired from the overtly radical business. Over the next 15 years, I edited three different rural weeklies in this area. I wrote many editorials, liberal enough to cause the Republican majority to snort but calm enough to keep the money coming in. But I got tired of it. And I was tired of always being on the job, of making little money and of having no financial prospects for my old age. I accepted a tax-supported job, and for the last 16 years I have enjoyed my income and my co-workers, but I have endured nonstop frustration with the work.

Over the years, I sent notes to Bob and Lois Need at Christmastime. Once in a great while, Bob would send a note back, telling me he was publishing a shipping newsletter, or writing an occasional book review, or working with a veterans' organization. Bob never again mentioned the North Coast Times Eagle to me. Most years, I heard from Lois instead. When Lois wrote to me in December 2004, she told me Bob had died of cancer the preceding July. He was 74 years old.

About that same time, I discovered the North Coast Times Eagle had actually survived its founder. For all these years, it has remained in publication under the guidance of Michael Paul McCusker. The rise and fall of Robert Stanley Need has been described numerous times, so I'll just say that, while the North Coast Times Eagle throne was taken from Bob by force, it was reclaimed from the usurper by Michael McCusker. I'm sure Bob was pleased to find the North Coast Times Eagle in McCusker's custody in the end.*

During the course of my rediscovery of the North Coast Times Eagle, I also discovered the Bay City Slug, and subsequently was invited to submit an article for publication. Unfortunately, my last journalistic stint on the Colorado prairies did me in. When I retired from the field, I abandoned radio and television, and I refused to pick up newspapers. Everything I know about the world, I learn from co-workers over the lunch table, and my ability to give fair comment on any current event or issue is gone forever.

Of course, some things never change. I have never looked at a photograph of George W. Bush without seeing him with a long, thin nose and dark, heavy jowls, with victory signs in the air, and mouthing the words, "I'm not a crook." When my son-in-law was called up with his reserve unit for duty in the Middle East, I relived the entire Vietnam era over the course of a single six-pack.

These things I understand,, but for the most part, I'm out of the loop. Once upon a time, I was brazen enough to assert, "Young men who have ideas act on them without reflecting; old men who have ideas reflect on them without acting." I may have been one of those young men, but looking at myself today, I discover that I've joined the old men.

And that, Robert Stanley need, is my absolute truth!

Terry Blevins, one of the last editors of the original North Coast Times Eagle, is acclaimed by staff and readers as its best editor. Founder publisher Robert Stanley Need called him, "The most expert Editor in our brief, tempestuous history."

He wrote this article for The Bay City Slug (The Paper That Hates Progress); Peter Smith, Editor/Publisher.

REPLY TO A COWARD

BY ROBERT STANLEY NEED

Friday morning's incoming mail was interesting. An envelope addressed "To The Editor?" and postmarked from Portland, contained a tear sheet of last week's Page 4, the editorial page of this newspaper. With black threatening arrows pointing at our editorial 'Exodus' bearing on the closing days of the Vietnam War, Paul Hudson's column bearing also on the same subject 'The Lucky War', and on Dave Attmore's column 'In Defense of Bill Walton', was a scrawled epithet, "What is your news source — Pravda?"

Usually members of our profession simply ignore such anonymous responses because in the fact of their anonymity alone lies the inherent character of their cowardice.

But this time, whoever this coward is, deserves not the courtesy, but the necessity of reply.

His "Pravda" remark graphically underscores the extreme ignorance and stupidity of a segment of our national population that has in the past, continues at present, and threatens the future with absolute destruction of American liberties and national independence.

The articles in last week's Times Eagle addressed themselves to pertinent current problems and situations prevalent in our social and political life, this being done not only under the protection, but in fulfillment of our rights and responsibilities under the 1st Amendment and the Constitution. They were all editorials in construction and content and therefore were a demonstration of our publication's and its columnists' right to free speech and open commentary of individual opinion.

Neither the Times Eagle nor its writers have any obligation whatsoever to please the state, or for that matter, please all of its readership, all of the time. Intelligent readers have found this dramatically true over the past four years and have assisted us in an expansion of influence that has led the Times Eagle to an unassailable position as a widely read forum of public opinion. The freedom to express one's self, either staff or readership, has developed a favorable recognition of this publication as "one of the finest expressions of independence within the state of Oregon and even beyond."

How ludicrous to compare the Times Eagle to Pravda! The North Coast Times Eagle, nor any member of its staff, and certainly not its readership, could long survive in the Soviet Union. Should the Russians successfully invade Oregon, the Times Eagle would receive the dubious distinction of being the very first publication to be discontinued and its irascible but

fiercely independent staff the very first lined up against the wall and shot. As the rifles would be lowered, the commander of the squad would read charges against us that echo back to those read against the colonial newsmen who died during and prior to our Revolution — "Guilty of defiance to authority, publication of material contrary to the will of the (Royal) state, and agitation of the populace." And from their point of view, we would admit to unmitigated guilt.

If our cowardly correspondent has ever possessed a modicum of logic, it must now have fully atrophied as it has in so many of his brothers and sisters. It is his virulent bigotry and ignorance that continues to generate the poison that prevents our nation from fully achieving the goals of brotherhood and tranquility we attempted to set for ourselves in 1776, and have fought and died for over the past two centuries.

He has brothers lurking in other places, writing letters, unsigned of course, to publications, or hollering from anonymity in the back of the mob, "Send the niggers back to Africa, Kill The commie, Pervert the kids, America love it or leave it," and so forth, ad nauseum.

He is too weak of character to come out into America's sunlight and speak his mind as a responsible citizen having at least a grain of human understanding that no two people are ever going to fully agree and that this diversity of opinion is the very bedrock of our freedoms.

This person is the archetypical bully hiding in the back alleys of our Republic to club to death both individuals and ideas that have the slightest hue different than his own, granting him the ability to have any at all.

Where is this man on election day, publicly casting his vote on the immediate issues of the nation? Where is his name at the bottom of letters to editors contributing to discourse on the problems of our times? Where in your anonymity do we find constructive argument for your side of the solutions to the many questions we collectively face?

We think Mr. Anonymous has got the whole thing backwards. The Times Eagle has no place in Russia, but he does. He'd be great as a faceless, no by-line reporter for Pravda, merely setting into type the canned releases handed down from the Kremlin. They need people like you, Mr. Anonymous, who don't question a damn thing and let somebody else run the state for you. We sure as hell wouldn't want you to apply for a job on our loud-mouthed, rambunctious, opinionated, crusading, sometimes right and sometimes wrong but always independent North Coast Times Eagle.

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