

By Scott Hammers*The Bulletin*

REDMOND — Tom McCall didn't think anyone would ever create a statue of him, according to former Secretary of State Norma Paulus, recalling a conversation with the former governor shortly before he died in 1983. But if they did, he knew what he wanted it to look like.

Years earlier, John Daniel Callaghan had taken a photograph of the governor on the Umpqua River, a fly rod clutched in his right hand, and a thigh-sized steelhead in his left. According to Paulus, McCall felt it captured the spirit of his work on environmental issues like no other picture of him.

That sculpture is now a reality, 25 years after McCall's death. On Tuesday, students at Redmond's Tom McCall Elementary School gathered to see it as it travels across the state on its way to a permanent home in Salem.

A graduate of Redmond Union High School, McCall grew up on a ranch north of Redmond, and the rocking horse he played on as a boy occupies a prominent spot in the entryway at Tom McCall Elementary. Principal Linda Seeberg said learning about the school's namesake has been a way of rooting the students to the community around them.

"For the last couple of weeks, they've been studying Tom McCall, why he was important, and why it was important to name a school after him," Seeberg said.

To mark the occasion, students performed a short skit, with students portraying McCall as a boy in Redmond, a college student at the University of Oregon, a journalist crusading for the

cleanup of the Willamette River and as governor.

Fifth-grader Nolan Beal played McCall as governor in the skit, donning a gray suit and booming out his lines for the audience. He said learning about McCall's life doesn't take up a lot of time at school and that he'd learned more in the last couple of days than he ever had before.

"In preparation for the statue coming here, we've learned a significant amount," Nolan said, describing McCall as "awesome."

Most students told similar stories of McCall's importance to the state, focused largely on his reputation as an early environmentalist.

"He was governor and he helped Central Oregon with the bottle bill and helped us have freedom to go to the beaches and the dunes so we have good places to be," said Leslie Adame, a fifth-grader.

Rip Caswell, the Troutdale sculptor who was commissioned to create the sculpture, said it was heartwarming to see so many children excited to see his work.

"I'd hope it inspires them to follow their own dreams," Caswell said. "Tom was an Eastern Oregon, rural guy like

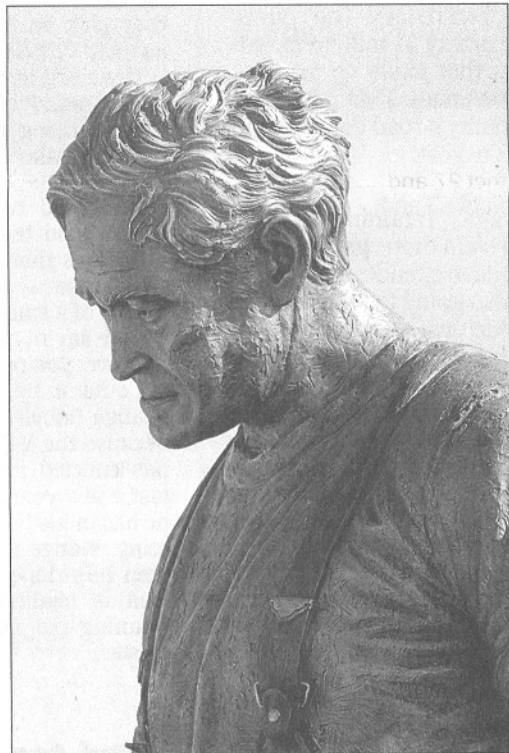
them, and he was passionate about something and followed his dreams and persevered."

The \$200,000 statue project, paid for entirely with private funds, is nearly complete. On Friday, the sculpture will be installed at Riverfront Park in Salem, just a few feet from the Willamette River.

Scott Hammers can be reached at 541-383-0387 or at shammers@bendbulletin.com.



Sculptor Rip Caswell took up steelhead fishing as a way to better understand former Gov. Tom McCall while creating the sculpture, he said.



The 12-foot-tall sculpture of former Gov. Tom McCall, which was at Redmond's new Tom McCall Elementary School on Tuesday, is scheduled to be installed in Salem's Riverfront Park on Friday.