

## **Who Was Tom McCall?**

Thomas Lawson McCall, one of Oregon's most influential governors, served two terms from 1967 to 1975. Prior to his election as governor, his journalistic career as a reporter, radio commentator, and television host made him a familiar voice and face to Oregonians. When his groundbreaking documentary, *Pollution in Paradise*, aired on KGW TV in 1962, he seemed a natural for the state's highest office. That promise was fulfilled and McCall came to personify the state's independent approach to national and regional issues. His deep commitment to social justice and the environment led to some of Oregon's best-known innovations. Listed below are some of his most notable accomplishments.

### **The Beach Bill**

One of McCall's first successes in office was the passage of The Beach Bill. Faced with Republican opposition in the legislature, it was not an easy victory. Though a Republican himself, McCall felt strongly that Oregon beaches should be accessible to the public and not controlled by commercial or private landowners.

Beach protection had first been addressed in 1913 when Governor Oswald West introduced a bill that gave control of the coastline to the Highway Department. While this was an important step in preserving Oregon's beaches, holes in the bill were revealed when a motel owner raised a fence, warning the public that this was private property, not to be trespassed by non-guests of the establishment. The loophole in the 1913 legislation lay in the definition of the public beach as beginning at low tide and ending at high tide. Thus ownership of the dry sand was up for grabs. The Highway Department sought to remedy this defect by giving ownership to the state for all land from low tide to the vegetation line above the dry sands. The opposition protested, claiming it was an infringement upon private ownership.

Entering the controversy, Governor McCall weighed in. When the newly crafted beach bill stalled in Committee, he wrote to Sidney Bazzett, a lone Republican supporter, with a message really meant for the House leadership. "We cannot afford to ignore our responsibilities to the public of this state for protecting the dry sands from the encroachment of crass commercialism." His next step was to leak the story to the press. The following day, newspaper headlines across the state blazoned McCall's outrage.

The public response overwhelmed Capital phone lines, while letters from angry citizens flooded state offices. Seizing the moment, McCall chartered a helicopter trip to the beach. On May 13th, with the media present and television cameras rolling, he demonstrated, in person, where the public ownership line was proposed and compared it to the narrow boundaries of the opposition. He also had in hand a scientific report from Oregon State University oceanographers, stating that a sixteen-foot elevation line best defined the beach area, not the seven feet proposed by Republican legislators. Leaning down from his six-foot-five-inch height, he literally drew a line in the sand, a moment that delighted the media. Responding to the ensuing public furor, Lee Johnson, a Republican from Portland, and James Redden, a Democrat from Medford, wrote a proposal that gave the state power to zone beaches and stop construction not approved by the Highway Department. The rewritten bill put preservation over development. Republican opposition dissolved under the weight of public opinion, and McCall signed the Beach Bill into law in July of 1967, only six months into his first term in office.

## **Formation of the Department of Environmental Quality**

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) was created by the legislature in 1969, approximately two years after McCall took office. The old Sanitary Authority had been assigned control of the state's rivers, but their limited enforcement capabilities, weakened by the scarcity of pollution laws, made them largely dependent on suggestion and negotiation. That agency, under McCall's administration, was supplanted and absorbed into the DEQ. The new department's expanded powers pleased McCall, who was fiercely devoted to controlling polluters and stopping environmental abuses. In that spirit, he sought to galvanize the DEQ. He wanted teeth in the enforcement of environmental regulations. With the empowered agency as a weapon to battle vested interests, McCall was able to continue his crusade against pollution.

The governor had headed the department himself until 1971. But with the pressure of other duties demanding his attention, he decided it was time to appoint a new spokesman. L. B. Day was his choice, a man of many talents with a prestigious background in law and politics, including liaison work with the Department of the Interior. Industrial giants that had used their power to influence government inspectors and bend regulations were back at work, polluting the Willamette. Despite screams from the corporate offenders and their supporters, Day continued McCall's policy of taking no prisoners. In 1972, when a major plant was forced to close because of blatant infractions, McCall took the heat and fired back. Why, he demanded, should individual companies be allowed to break the law without repercussion? This was in response to a protest from employees fearing they would lose jobs if the injunction to comply or close was carried out. Instead of caving in, McCall and Day marched to the corporate offices where he assured the workers, who blamed him and DEQ for the possible shutdown and loss of their jobs, that it was the management's disregard for the law and non-compliance with regulations that threatened them, not the policies. The plant officials ultimately backed down. This dramatic encounter made for great media coverage, but it also made a point. McCall could face down opposition and stand on principle.

## **Vortex I**

When McCall took office as Oregon's 30th governor, waves of idealistic young people were protesting the Vietnam war. "Make Love Not War" was a favorite slogan. Longhaired young men sprouted beards. Girls abandoned their bras. Communes flourished along with a back-to-nature philosophy. The Establishment was being called into question. Middle class Americans were divided, some hailing the courage of their children to embrace such notions, to twine flowers in their hair, and write songs that praised peace and condemned war. Others saw them as threatening traditional values. The People's Army Jamboree seemed to define the hippie culture, and they had picked Portland for their 1970 meeting ground. The fact that the American Legion was scheduling a huge conference at the same time brought the possibility of major confrontations between Vietnam war protestors and the conservative Legionnaires. Fears of possible bloodshed could not be ignored. On May 4th, violence between Kent State students protesting the invasion of Cambodia clashed with Ohio National Guardsmen deployed by their governor. Bullets struck fifteen students. Four died. In Oregon, OSU students, responding to what they termed a massacre, pelted the ROTC building with rocks, and PSU students blockaded downtown Portland streets. President Husky closed the PSU campus as tensions rose in the city.

Increasing pressure from conservatives was aimed at the governor. The FBI claimed that other anti-war groups were expected to descend upon the City of Roses. Something must be done. Strong advice from the Nixon White House as well as from other factions bombarded Salem. But one thing was clear. McCall was not going to, as Nero reportedly did, fiddle while Portland burned. The solution, not without risk or repercussions, was to allow The People's Jamboree to hold an event, self-named Vortex I, at McIver State Park, just a few short miles from Portland. A sanctioned music festival promised to lure the majority of protesters to the forested park along the Clackamas River and defuse the threat of violence. Medical emergency tents would be erected on site and a security ring positioned around the park perimeter. In essence, it would be a mini-Woodstock.

Despite doubts as to the wisdom of this alternative, there were few other options. Biting the bullet, McCall gave his consent even though at the time, he considered it to be political suicide. Responding to public fears and criticisms, he made a widely televised speech in late August prior to the event, pointing out that Vortex I would not only prevent violence in Portland, but also uphold the First Amendment. His decision, happily, did not ruin his political career, for he won the 1970 election with just under 56 per cent of the vote. In sanctioning the event, McCall proved himself a bold leader whose influence would extend into the future.

### **The Bottle Bill**

The state of Vermont had passed a bottle bill in 1953 in an effort to deal with roadside litter, but manufacturers and brewers exerted enough pressure to force a repeal of the measure. The power of these vested interests was not challenged again until Oregon raised the issue, writing a bill that put a five-cent deposit on bottles and cans of soda pop and beer. It was the beginning of the anti-litter and recycling movement.

McCall is credited with creating Oregon's bottle bill, but the idea actually came from Richard Chambers. Chambers, an outdoorsman who loved hiking, became disgusted with the amount of litter left at campsites, on the beaches, and tossed beside trails or highways. At last, he decided to do something about it. Despite his dislike of political involvement, he began a mail campaign to drum up support for a measure to outlaw litter, especially soft drink and beer containers. His efforts gained widespread support from various organizations such as granges, garden clubs, and emerging environmental groups. He also contacted Paul Hanneman, a local state representative, and showed him, in person, an eye-popping, litter-strewn intersection in the tiny town of Pacific City. As a result, the legislator helped to craft and promote House Bill 1157, requiring deposits on returnable bottles and cans. The 1969 bill was buried in committee after facing severe opposition from the same interests that had prevailed in Vermont. Though McCall favored the idea, he felt the time was not right. The bottle and can manufacturers were up in arms and had plenty of money to spend. But he was willing to wait if it meant success. In 1971 he introduced a revamped bottle bill that still required deposits on returnable drink containers. As a result, he became the measure's prime champion.

McCall spoke strongly in support of the legislation destined to be the cornerstone of subsequent recycling and anti-litter laws. Just as it had in the beach controversy, his friendly, out-going manner and personal charisma gained public support for the Bottle Bill. The bill passed and was signed into law in 1971.

## **The Bicycle Bill**

In March of 1971, McCall signed into law a measure that dedicated 1% of state funds to creating bike and pedestrian projects, the first bill addressing bicyclists and pedestrians in the nation. This was another first in McCall's legacy. Today we are accustomed to the designated lanes and paths that allow public use in a safe environment.

## **Death With Dignity**

In his address at the annual Republican convention in 1972, McCall dropped something of a bombshell. Death with dignity, he said, should legally be available. This subject had not been discussed in the public venue and wouldn't be until 1975 when the fate of Karen Quinlan, trapped for three years in an irreversible coma, arose. Did her parents have the moral or legal authority to have life support systems disconnected? Though McCall had pondered this issue privately, he had never addressed it publicly. "It's an unclear right that somehow must be clarified and made legally available. Death with dignity in one's advanced years [should be an option], as opposed to death as a vegetable," he said. Though his idea was not pursued during his governorship or lifespan, it did forecast what would become another hallmark of Oregon's independent style, the passing of the Death With Dignity Bill in 1994.

**Land Use Planning:** Its history and implementation In his 1966 campaign for governor, McCall's theme was "livability." In his speeches he defined economic growth as tied to environmental concerns. Progress for the state was measured in part, he said, by these words: "[progress]...is closely allied to maintaining...a livability we must preserve and enhance. It is our duty to keep the scenery un-blighted, the air fresh and unsullied, the water pure and sparkling."

Using the political capital largely built on his documentary, *Pollution in Paradise*, McCall actively pursued environmental goals. He was convinced that much of Oregon's pollution problems, such as untreated sewage or inadequate septic containments, could be traced back to poor planning. While local zoning laws were on the books, they were often ignored. An exploding population continued to increase the demand for new housing, more subdivisions, and expanded commercial development. As a result, existing infrastructures such as sewer lines, clean water, and other public services were strained to the maximum. As patchwork development continued to encroach on agricultural land, farmers saw their tax burdens skyrocket. The Willamette Valley, which had some of the richest soil in Oregon and excelled in producing premium crops, was a prime location for residential and commercial expansion. Woodburn, in the heart of the valley, was hailed as "The Berry Capital of the World," and the fertile soil of the vanished Lake Labish near Salem yielded famous red and yellow onions as well as other market produce. Farming and timber were the mainstays of Oregon's economy, something McCall well understood.

But land planning remained controversial, stirring heated opposition and political bargaining. McCall's sponsored Senate Bill 10 in 1969 had been strenuously opposed by industry and even large property owners who believed their right to sell or build would be negatively impacted. The only surviving part of that proposal was the requirement that local governments complete their zoning laws within two years. The victory, though small, later helped define land use planning as part of land conservation. But four years later, few local governments had complied with the two-year requirement.

Seeking public involvement, McCall launched "Project Foresight" in 1972. Members of the Project's task force met with civic groups and in town halls. They presented two scenarios; one

the spectacle of a crowded, paved over farmland, hemmed in by unregulated developments; the second, a green and prosperous valley that featured harmonious development that preserved the flourishing farmland. McCall had grown up on a ranch in Eastern Oregon and was especially sensitive to this issue. He toured the state, making impassioned speeches on behalf of land planning.

Still, farmland continued to shrink as farmers sold acreage to developers, partly to gain financially and partly to escape their increasing tax burden. Alarmed by the continuing trend, McCall spoke to the 1973 legislature in powerful and stirring words, pleading his case. But his impassioned plea seemed to have fallen on deaf ears, and the bill still languished.

When re-investigation (ordered by McCall) of environmental abuses on the coast revealed the same violations cited in a previous report, McCall gained fresh ammunition for the passage of SB 100. Raw sewage was being dumped into coastal waters from subdivisions built without adequate sewer lines or septic systems (some consisting of open septic pools). McCall promptly released this report to the media. He also issued an executive order banning all new construction in Lincoln County. The ensuing public outrage demanded that action be taken. As a result, SB100, designed to protect the public interest and environmental concerns, was signed into law in 1974. The passage of the bill protected farms and timberland from urban sprawl.

### **Waterfront Park**

During the race for governor in 1970, Waterfront Park, originally Bob Straub's idea, was one that McCall openly agreed with despite the fact they were political opponents. Once elected, McCall initiated the Willamette Greenway that gave access to what was once again a living river. Previously, in 1968, he had formed a task force that resulted in Harbor Drive, a major thoroughfare, being demolished, and replaced by the Eastbank Freeway (I-5). In 1974, a new park, in contrast to the ugly Harbor Drive, provided space for people to walk in, play, and enjoy themselves. A year after McCall's death in 1983, the park was christened Tom McCall Waterfront Park, a tribute to his untiring efforts to keep the rivers and lands of his beloved Oregon clean and accessible.

### **Energy Crisis**

In the early 1970s, energy shortages and increasing consumption of electrical power loomed large, not only in Oregon, but nationwide. More oil was being imported from the Middle East, and when Libya's dictator nationalized oil production in his country, shortages began to be felt in the United States. Prices went up and gas stations saw long lines of cars circling the block. Congestion was even worse in Oregon as the state had many independent gas stations, stations practically ignored by the major oil companies.

McCall and other conservationists had previously warned that over-consumption of resources would eventually result in shortages. Yet the truth of this prediction seemed to take average Americans by surprise. Used to cheap gasoline, developers had scattered suburban communities far and wide, miles from cities that supplied jobs, services, and merchandise. How would we survive if oil sources dried up?

In 1972-73 that shortage was brought home not just to Oregonians but to the rest of America. Heating oil was in short supply. Factories, manufacturing plants, and public buildings were at risk of closure. Trucking, shipping, and travel suffered. When an exceptionally dry winter threatened Oregon hydroelectric power, it seemed that we were due for hard times.

McCall had formed an energy analysis team, composed of young, forward thinking people early in 1973 and now made good use of its findings. Rather than viewing the situation as a complete doomsday scenario, McCall proposed ways to cut consumption. Turn down your thermostat. Keep highway speeds at 55 miles per hour. Stagger shifts for working people. Put on an extra sweater. Turn off unnecessary lights, including energy-consuming advertising. He even convinced businesses to shut off their outdoor signs at night. Those that failed to comply soon gave in when confronted by a gung-ho public. While the legislators in other states initially scoffed at McCall's plans, as the energy crisis dragged on, they found themselves adopting the measures. One of McCall's more creative efforts, inspired by a member of his think tank, was the initiation of an even-odd gas-rationing plan. Cars with even numbered license plates would be served on one day and odd numbered plates the next. This strategy was used by other states and most recently in the aftermath of 2012's Superstorm Sandy.

With the energy crisis squeezing American trade and commerce, proposals to relax environmental standards were heard. McCall spoke strongly against this approach at a governors' conference in the fall of 1973. This was a perfect venue since President Nixon, struggling through the Watergate scandal, had come hoping to solicit support from Republican governors. McCall was not placated by Nixon's apologies, but stuck to his guns, saying he was not going to be blindsided by new revelations of misdeeds. This opinion should not have been unexpected since McCall in May of 1973 had told a reporter that impeachment might be the best thing for the country, "to clear the air." And later, when asked if he thought Nixon knew about the Watergate break-in in advance, McCall obliged, stating that "[Nixon] would be a sloppy president not to have known." Nixon denied further knowledge of other misdeeds, but when the White House tapes came to light, it only supported McCall's mistrust of the president. But the point always implicit in McCall's comments and speeches was that the public trust must not be abused, politically or environmentally.

### **The Passing of an Oregon Icon**

When Tom McCall died in January of 1983, he left a legacy of bucking the system that had made money for industrial giants and ignored the need to protect water, air, and land, not just for the current generation, but for those who came after. McCall, sometimes called a maverick, had rarely hesitated to speak his mind. One of his most publicized remarks in 1971 was born out of his concern for a rapidly expanding population, an influx that threatened to overwhelm existing infrastructures. "We want you to visit our State of Excitement often. Come again and again. But, for heaven's sake, don't move here to live." Considering today's sentiments, his words may seem quaint or regionalist. But his willingness to speak honestly, if impetuously, coupled with his talent for the dramatic, made him an exciting combination of visionary and old west beliefs. "Oregon should not be a haven to the buffalo hunter mentality," he said. "The interests of Oregon for today and in the future must be protected from the grasping wastrels of the land."

Almost ten years prior to his death, McCall had been successfully treated for cancer. But the disease was fated to return in the early '80s. In August of 1982, he received the news that the cancer had spread throughout his body, and he had an estimated six months to live. But McCall was not through yet. As he left the hospital he said, "I'm restless. I may be headed for Valhalla like a bat out of hell."

Time was running out and McCall knew what strength he had must be used wisely. But terminal cancer could not dim the dying warrior's fire as the November elections approached. Oregon's

land-use laws were being threatened by a new generation. Measure 6 would repeal everything McCall and his supporters had worked so hard to pass. Frail and unsteady, he went to a University Club meeting supposedly to only introduce the main speaker. The familiar sight of microphones inspired him, and knowing this could be his last fight, he spoke passionately against the 'hand wringers' that moaned the economy was suffering because of environmental laws passed during his term in office. His final words that evening summed up his feelings and left his listeners choked with emotion. "...if the legacy we helped give Oregon and which made it twinkle from afar—if it goes, then I guess I wouldn't want to live in Oregon anyhow."

In the countdown to the election, McCall wrote in colorful prose to an old friend about his fight to preserve land use planning: "...the challenges that set my jaw remain...[and have] bolstered my resolve to stick around...for a while, to smite a few more bastards."

Measure six, though leading by twenty-one points in September, was jolted after McCall's last speech in October. In November, the effort to repeal land-use planning was defeated by 56% of the vote.

One of McCall's greatest contributions made in the last year of his life was his injunction to remember that natural resources are not inexhaustible, that loving the earth means protecting it from those who see, first and foremost, profit in promoting unrestrained consumption.

## **Tom McCall: The Early Years (1913-1963)**

### **Childhood**

Thomas Lawson McCall was born on March 22, 1913 near the village of Egypt, Massachusetts. Though conceived in Oregon, Tom took his first breath in the rarified air of his maternal grandfather's estate, Dreamwold. His mother, Dorothy Lawson, had left the McCall family ranch to deliver her children at her beloved childhood home. Thus Tom was a product both of Oregon's western culture, horses, cattle, and wide-open spaces, and a New England heritage. But the young McCall's experience was far from New England's stereotypical austerity. Dorothy McCall was the daughter of Thomas Lawson, who had risen from humble beginnings to become the wealthiest man in America. It was from Dreamwold that Tom and his siblings attended school in the years before Lawson's financial ruin. But his McCall heritage was also rooted in Massachusetts. Tom's father, Henry "Hal" McCall was the son of Sam McCall, who spent twenty years as a congressional representative. It is interesting to note that Sam McCall and his grandson were both labeled maverick Republicans.

Hal McCall had fallen in love with Oregon on a trip west in 1909, a year before his marriage to the beautiful and aristocratic Dorothy Lawson. Though bankrolled by his wealthy father-in-law, Hal was a greenhorn in terms of ranching experience. This lack hit the family fortunes hard after Thomas Lawson's passing in 1925. Still, Hal was determined to make a go of things, until failure of his attempts at farming or running a dairy drained his spirit as well as his bank account. It was Dorothy who took the reins during these hard times. She learned to cook for harvest crews, clean house, harangue and negotiate with creditors, and manage the children. In the evenings, surrounded by Tom, and his siblings, Henry Jr. and Bebs, she read from the classics, so that Tom absorbed the sweep and grandeur of the English language, a resource that would serve him well as a journalist and newscaster.

The McCalls returned to Oregon just before Lawson's financial crash in 1922. But far from pining over the loss of Dreamwold's opulence, young Tom loved living full time in Oregon. The wide-open spaces surrounding the ranch under the rimrock appealed to his boyish sense of adventure. Horseback riding, fishing, and farm chores would help to shape a boy's love of nature into the man's passionate desire to preserve and protect Oregon's pristine beauty. Ever energetic, Tom with his brother, Henry Jr., and sister, Bebs, "published" a home newspaper recounting ranch happenings. He was a leader at school, initiating new games, and displaying the curiosity and wit of a developing intellect. Naturally this made for a mischievousness that could try the patience of the adults around him. As Tom entered adolescence he began a growth spurt. Weighing well under 130 pounds and towering over his classmates, he later described himself as clumsy and uncoordinated. But there was nothing clumsy about his intellectual abilities.

After high school graduation, he entered the University of Oregon and majored in journalism and high jinks. Tom's penchant for having a good time negatively impacted his studies, though to his credit, he buckled down to several all-nighters and successfully wrote the thesis required for his 1936 journalism degree.

### **Post-University Days**

Tom's writing abilities, coupled with a lively interest in people and events, made him a natural reporter. Hearing of a job opportunity with the News-Review, he headed to Moscow, Idaho. As a reporter, he covered sports as well as general news, often ferreted out on his own initiative. The career he'd begun forming with his childhood home newspaper was maturing. During his time in Moscow, he met, fell in love with, and married Audrey Owen. It was a union destined to last until his death.

After World War II erupted, Tom and Audrey moved to Portland where he found employment with The Oregonian. The newspaper owned two radio stations, a happy circumstance for McCall. He was in the right place at the right time. His broadcast debut was making a public service announcement on air. Though beset with severe stage fright, he was eventually hired to "read the news." In order to avoid confusion with two other announcers named Tom, he began using his middle name of Lawson.

In 1942 he was hired as a commentator for KGW. Public exposure would give him name recognition, though he continued as Lawson McCall on a nightly radio program titled Around the Town. Using his experience as a reporter, he trolled the city for stories, sometimes scooping regular newsmen. He brought tales of poverty, injustice, and just plain human-interest subjects to public attention. After interviewing Claire Argow, an activist in the Oregon Prison Association, he threw his time and personal efforts into the cause of ending abusive practices in local jails as well as instituting humane treatment of prisoners. He eventually became the association president.

In 1944, Tom and Audrey's first son, Tad, was born, and though Tom was enjoying a steady income and some local fame, he wanted to join the military. He had been warned that he would not pass the physical because of knee problems and a recurring hernia. Finally he rejected all the reasons why he should not enlist, signed up with the Navy, and was accepted. Despite failing many of basic training's physical tasks, he was assigned as a battle correspondent on the U.S.S. St. Louis. Witnessing the attempts of Japanese kamikaze fliers to crash into his ship was a harrowing experience, one that McCall described in a letter to his wife as causing "the ancient knees [to] quiver."



## Journalism, Politics, and Television

After the war ended in 1945, McCall came home to revive earlier dreams of a political nature. Always conscious of the underdog, McCall was an early champion of social equality. In 1946, when Portland was one of the most segregated cities in the west, he championed the ending of white-only jobs at local shipyards and backed Urban League campaigns against racism. Joining the Young Republican Party in 1949, he wrote policy papers and delivered luncheon speeches. On the home front, Sam, a second son, was added to the family.

McCall got his political feet wet in 1954 when the Republicans chose him to run for congress. His Democratic opponent, Edith Green, was surfacely an unsophisticated housewife, but in reality a tough campaigner. Thus McCall's introduction to the rough-and-tumble world of politics would teach him a valuable lesson. Bruised by what he felt were unfair insinuations about his financial health, his earlier optimism dimmed. When the polls showed Green ahead of him, supporters urged him to strike back, something McCall refused to do, believing that women must be treated with respect. But after an Oregonian poll showed him behind Green, Joseph Smith, his campaign manager, persuaded him to deliver on live television, a hard-hitting speech composed by an independent writer. The content belittled Green's qualifications and was, in essence, a bitter commentary. As soon as the cameras were turned off, McCall regretted the deed. As he said, "It was the most shameful thing I ever did." Green won the election by a narrow margin of five percent. McCall, however, learned there was little profit in compromising his own standards.

Once again a free agent, McCall returned to his journalistic roots. But now there was a difference. Portland's first TV station, KPTV, had come into being and he was hired as a news analyst and reporter. His lanky frame and eastern accent found an audience, despite some viewers who thought he had a funny way of speaking. Just as stage fright had plagued him in his first radio broadcasts, he was often stricken with nerves when faced with glass-eyed cameras and the hustle of a busy newsroom on the sidelines. He stayed with the station until Ivan Smith, who had hired him, walked off the job in 1956 after refusing to deliver the news with a new sponsor's product on his desk. When McCall was told to fill his place, Tom picked up his hat and followed Smith out the door.

McCall's next employer was another new television station based in Seattle. He met with Tom Dargan, yet another Tom, who had been sent to launch KGW's Portland branch in 1957. The two men hit it off, agreeing on major points of interest: one, to keep up with the news; two, not to back down when controversial issues were raised; and three, to conduct investigative reporting. Big news stories were electrifying the airways: an indictment of Portland's mayor Shrunck on bribery charges while he was sheriff and Shrunck's testimony before a Senate committee investigating mob activities chaired by young Robert F. Kennedy. McCall also began hosting the weekly television show, Viewpoint. He engaged his guests in discussions covering topics from civil rights to family matters.

McCall's preparation for a broadcast consisted of writing notes to himself until they mounted in piles in and around his desk and no doubt, resided in his coat pockets. Comments were typed on a manual typewriter. No typist, he punctuated his numerous errors with the colorful language learned on his father's ranch and probably in his college frat house. The notes scrawled in the margins of his typed script made reading his own words difficult, but with the Lawson flair for drama, he kept his public tuning in.

In 1962, Tom Dargan, impressed by McCall's coverage of pollution issues, proposed that he create a documentary exposing the damage being inflicted on Oregon lands and rivers by unchecked industrial practices. Despite threats of lawsuits and the loss of advertising, Dargan pressed on, telling McCall to keep on the project. Pollution in Paradise, aired and backed by KGW, revealed the shocking condition of the Willamette River and air quality. Raw sewage from cities and effluent from mills poured into the river. From Eugene to Portland, industrial smoke stacks released pollutants without restriction. The coastal town of Newport suffered the smell of rotten eggs emitted from a major pulp mill. Swimming in the Willamette had been declared unsafe. Foam many inches deep floated on the surface. Not even carp could survive the toxic environment. Fish carcasses sometimes rose in a blanket of decay. As early as 1938, E. coli had been discovered in the slime-choked river. Oregon's hepatitis levels were the highest in the nation. A 1944 study of the water below Portland had delivered the shocking news that oxygen content registered zero. The river was officially dead. Nothing could survive in the poisonous mix of untreated sewage, chemical dumps, and factory waste. In response to public reaction to the revelations of Pollution in Paradise, the 1963 legislature passed a measure allowing the state to shut down polluters, a piece of legislation that became an important part of Oregon's environmental policies.

Although his name did not appear in the screen credits, McCall wrote and narrated the entire film. He ended with the words, "For how far pollution marches in Oregon is a matter in the final analysis of citizen responsibility, should the citizens face up to it."

In 1963, McCall's rising public visibility brought him to the attention of Douglas McKay, then governor of the state. McKay listened as McCall addressed a Young Republican luncheon meeting and liked what he heard. As a result, the governor offered him a position as his top aide. The job offered less than what McCall was making as a radio broadcaster, but it put him into the world of politics, policies, and inside knowledge of how government operated. He took the offer. In this capacity, he learned his way around the capital and even delivered speeches on McKay's behalf. He made friends with almost everyone and could often be found in the cafeteria having lunch with new acquaintances. In 1964, he ran for Secretary of State and won. His next stop would be the governorship in 1967.

From: <http://www.tommccall.org/about-tom.html>