

Ken Kesey to be immortalized downtown

Fundraising efforts are underway to build a memorial statue of the famous Eugene author

Roman Gokhman
Campus/City Culture Reporter

Ten days before Eugene writer Ken Kesey was admitted to Sacred Heart Medical Center for the last time, Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Brian Lanker took a snapshot of him at his Pleasant Hill farm for a story in *Modern Maturity*, a national magazine. Kesey died in November 2001, but the photograph is being used to preserve the legacy of the famed Oregonian forever.

A group of community leaders, including Lanker, University President Dave Frohnmayer, football head coach Mike Bellotti and sculptor and longtime Kesey friend Pete Helzer, is campaigning to have a sculpture of the writer constructed and unveiled at the 2003 Eugene Celebration.

"It's important for us to remember the importance people in this community make to the community as a whole," Lanker said. "Ken Kesey is clearly one of those people."

Lanker, who was a close friend of Kesey's, spearheaded the effort by contacting Kesey's friends to see who else was interested. Other community leaders stepped up, and "that's where the whole thing started," Lanker said.

He developed a poster out of the photograph, and Eugene printing company IP/Koke donated the printing costs. The poster, with a tax-deductible cost of \$25, is on sale at various bookstores in Eugene, Springfield, Corvallis and Portland, as well as online.

"It's not just a poster for your wall; it's a contribution to the Ken Kesey memorial," Campaign Coordinator Cathy Briner said.

Helzer became involved after talk of a memorial sculpture came up and the Kesey family suggested that he be involved somehow.

He said there is no one with as high a stature in Oregon as Kesey.

Kesey "is the closest thing to a creative genius I have ever seen," Helzer said. "There is a sense of pride and can bring (Eugene) a lot of cultural attention."

The late author's work is taught in various University courses and at other institutions all over the world.

"Anyone who teaches modern literature or American literature could incorporate Kesey," English department head and Professor John Gage said.

Professor Emeritus Glen Love, who teaches several literature courses, said Kesey's work is invaluable to the University.

"He's written one or two of the best novels about the Northwest," Love said.

So far, \$15,000 to \$20,000 of the \$115,000 needed for the sculpture has been raised, Briner said. The majority of the funding is coming

from sales of the posters.

Lanker said the group wanted as many people to take part in the fundraising as possible, instead of going to the big donors first.

"We wanted to make it a grassroots effort," he said.

The sculpture will be of Kesey reading to three children, and it will be placed at the intersection of Willamette Street and Broadway.

"This sculpture is something for future generations to ... come and know the man and know that he was part of the community," Lanker said.

Lanker and Helzer are both friends of the Kesey family. Lanker worked and traveled with Kesey, and Helzer sculpted, among others, the memorial to Jed Kesey, Ken Kesey's son, who was one of two University wrestlers who died while coming back from a meet at Pullman, Wash., in 1984.



Courtesy Brian Lanker

Sculptor Pete Helzer works on a statue of Ken Kesey.

Measure

continued from page 1

these cuts, the Oregon University System alone would face a nearly \$27 million reduction in the 2001-03 budget, \$13.2 million which would be abated by general fund reductions and \$13.6 million which would be cut from programs, classes, staff and campus projects.

University students will also pay a tuition surcharge of \$10 per credit for winter and spring terms if the measure fails.

Opponents of the measure are saying, however, that despite possible cuts, raising income taxes during a recession will only hurt the economy further. Fifteen Oregon legislators stated in the voter's pamphlet that

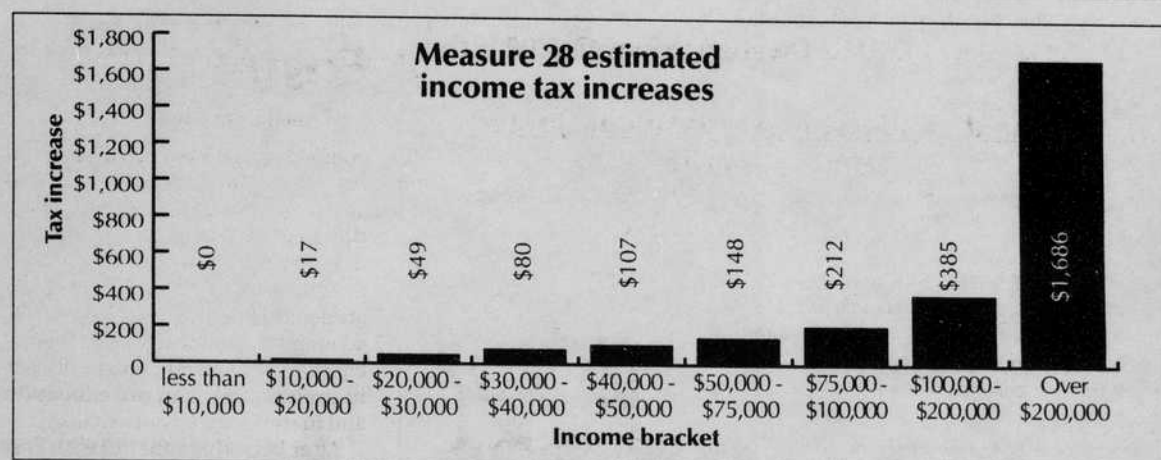
increasing taxes continues "non-essential" government spending and blocks reform.

"Your 'No' vote for this unnecessary tax increase will not turn prisoners loose, will not increase the size of our classrooms or force our senior citizens to choose between rent or food. Such scare tactics are not true," the representatives said.

Taxpayer Association of Oregon Executive Director Jason Williams concurred.

"It's economic suicide," he said. "No one with a rational mind will believe you can tax your way into prosperity."

Proponents contend that Measure 28 will both restore funding and help Oregon's struggling economy.



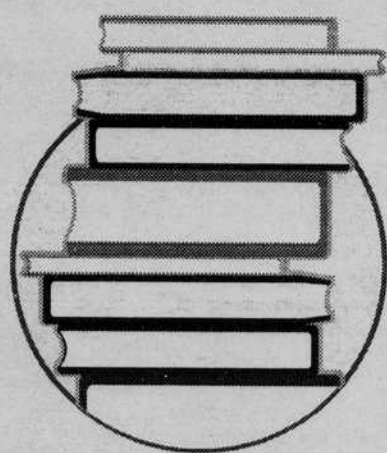
Yes on 28 Committee Spokeswoman Patty Wentz said education is important for economic growth, and sufficiently funding education will stimulate the economy.

"Business leaders are being publicly concerned about the ability to recruit high-quality workers for their companies in a state that is in dire economic straits," she said. There is

a "clear correlation between the education system and the economy."

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