

From the Oral History of

BRUCE S. HOWARD

Board Member, President, Councillor of Save The Redwoods League, 1963–2003

Interviews conducted by Ann Lage in 2003, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.¹

LAGE: We were going to start today talking about the biggest, most public issue having to do with the redwoods, which has to do with Pacific Lumber, and you were reminded of a story. Start with that story.

HOWARD: I was reminded that before the takeover by [Charles] Hurwitz, Howard Jones, chairman of the board of Pacific Lumber invited John Dewitt and myself to lunch at the PU [Pacific Union] Club, and we had a very pleasant lunch. Then it was at that gathering that he told us that it was very possible that Hurwitz had the upper hand on this unfriendly takeover.

¹ Presented here is a brief excerpt from Bruce S. Howard “Board Member, President, Councillor of Save The Redwoods League, 1963–2003,” an oral history conducted by Ann Lage in 2003, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2005. © 2005 by The Regents of the University of California.

The oral history excerpts in this “Environmental Law — Oral History” section are intended to provide personal commentaries on the topics discussed in the preceding Environmental Law “Articles” and “Book” sections. This excerpt relates to the article: Darren F. Speece. *From Corporatism to Citizen Oversight: The Legal Fight Over the California Redwoods, 1969–1999*, in this volume, 13 CAL. LEGAL HIST. 57 (2018).

The whole thing would be very much different than it was before. So that was a blow, and we didn't understand. The interesting thing is that prior to that time, [it was] the largest company that we dealt with — the Save The Redwoods League dealt with — we bought the largest amount of acreage from the Pacific Lumber Company.

LAGE: You'd always had a very high opinion of the company, as I understand.

HOWARD: Oh very, and they were always very fair. We bought Pepperwood Grove, we bought the Fern Canyon. We bought a lot of the Prairie Creek from them. It was a very nice relationship. They were most cooperative and very helpful to us.

LAGE: That was Mr. Jones who was head of Pacific Lumber?

HOWARD: Yes, he was the chairman of the board.

LAGE: Did they feel that they had no choice? Could they have fought that takeover in some way?

HOWARD: I think by the time they realized what Hurwitz had done, preliminarily, it was too late. They just couldn't fight it by that time.

LAGE: And it was sort of early in that takeover phenomenon.

HOWARD: Oh, that's right. It was one of those early takeovers. That was a great blow. Just recently, this is 2003, Save The Redwoods League made its first purchase of any land that's owned by the Pacific Lumber Company, since Hurwitz took over.

LAGE: Oh, now I hadn't realized that.

HOWARD: Yes, we just bought a small parcel from them, over in the Grizzly Creek area. We could not meet step one with them. The man that we used to deal with in the early days, who then, under Hurwitz, became the president of their lumber operations.

LAGE: Was that John Campbell?

HOWARD: He was based in Scotia. He had to do what he was told.

LAGE: But he had been with Pacific Lumber previously.

HOWARD: He had been with Pacific Lumber previously. We couldn't get to base one with him. His superiors wouldn't let him go to base one.

LAGE: Would he ever let down his —

HOWARD: Yes. He and Katie Anderton — he's retired now — have had a very good relationship. I think, on several occasions, he let it be known that he couldn't get out fast enough, but I think he had to look out for himself, which one has to do in this life. Then he finally retired.

LAGE: I noticed in the minutes there seem to have been several attempts in the eighties, to buy, or at least to offer Pacific Lumber money for —

HOWARD: We were negotiating with them for Grizzly Creek, which is out Highway 36. We felt it was a very fair offer, in other words, the negotiations. We just could never get to the point where you get into serious negotiations. They just wouldn't allow it. They just wouldn't allow it.

LAGE: Did you ever deal above John Campbell, with Mr. Hurwitz, himself, or others?

HOWARD: No, no. We never were permitted to go beyond John Campbell. I don't think we really wanted to. [laughter]

LAGE: Did you get in on the negotiations personally?

HOWARD: I was in on some of the early negotiations, yes, with John. He's a nice guy, but his hands were tied. It was too bad because they had some wonderful properties that we wanted to participate in.

LAGE: The big brouhaha was over the Headwaters Forest. Did Save The Redwoods League play any kind of a —

HOWARD: The Save The Redwoods League played hands off in the background. We supported a lot of the parties that protested.

LAGE: Now tell me about that. How did you support the parties that protested?

HOWARD: We let it be known to them that however we could help, let us know. For the most part, we played a very quiet role in that. It's interesting to know that when you get into a negotiation, when they get into all kinds of negotiations, where the federal government and the state government are involved, where taxpayer money is involved, there seems to be no limit to how high they can go. We had had the Headwaters Forest appraised.

LAGE: How early on?

HOWARD: Oh, maybe three years before all this brouhaha came up. It was worth, according to the appraisal that we got, it was worth about a third of what the state and federal government paid. They just gave money away.

LAGE: But on the other hand, they not only bought the Headwaters, which was only three thousand acres, but also this fifty thousand additional acres.

HOWARD: The surrounding area, that's right. Our position in this was that we couldn't really do much. We decided that rather than make enemies out of everybody, we just kept quiet, for the most part.

LAGE: I saw several news reports that said the Save The Redwoods League has identified Headwaters Forest as a marginal forest. Is that correct?

HOWARD: Yeah, well, because it's so steep. It's a terribly steep terrain. John and I walked over it, and it's for a mountain goat. It's a beautiful stand of redwoods. On the other hand, it would not be very easy for a lot of the general public to negotiate to see the whole thing.

LAGE: It seems as you talk, that you were thinking about recreational use, and it became something much bigger. It became habitat preservation.

HOWARD: Oh, absolutely. It did. There's no question that it was an important acquisition, but it got out of hand. When we saw where the direction that the negotiations were going, the panic that everybody put behind it, and the price was going up and up, we said, "Back out, back away. Don't have anything to do with it."

LAGE: I think it was called sort of the last remaining virgin, or the biggest remaining virgin redwood stand.

HOWARD: I think that's absolutely true, although, I think in many cases it was exaggerated. I think that's where they get their leverage, that this is the last, and what are we going to do, and so forth.

LAGE: I'm going to shift this just a little bit. So many people got in on the [Headwaters Forest controversy] — the radical environmentalists, all the celebrities. What did you think of those more radical groups, like Earth First!?

HOWARD: We had a meeting in that general area, at the Women's Federation Grove. Oh, I know, we had our seventy-fifth birthday and party at the Founders' Grove, where it was rather interesting. We had planned on a

thousand people — there must have been three thousand there, because as we came into the park, out on the parking area across the bridge —

LAGE: Where was it at?

HOWARD: At the Founders' Grove.

LAGE: In relation to the Headwaters.

HOWARD: Well, this is further south. Headwaters is on Highway 36. This was at the Founders' Grove, but this was a big issue at that time. All the radical groups were there.

LAGE: They came to your party?

HOWARD: They came to our party. They were, for the most part, pretty polite. One lady couldn't keep quiet, and they quieted her down. As we drove in to park, the catering — the Eureka Inn was catering it. And he was just frantic, and was just roaring off to Eureka to get enough food to feed them, because he'd figured on a thousand. He did very well. He dug up extra food. It was a fun program and so forth. Then we walked over to the Women's Federation Grove, which is about a half a mile away. These radical groups sort of set up, not picket lines, but just harassing lines.

LAGE: Of the Save The Redwoods League?

HOWARD: Against the Save The Redwoods League.

LAGE: What were they wanting you to do?

HOWARD: Well, they wanted us to put in much more vocal position, in opposing the acquisition of the Headwaters Grove. We just didn't play a loud enough role for them.

LAGE: Do you remember when that seventy-fifth anniversary was?

HOWARD: Oh dear. It would have been probably around '94, '95?

LAGE: I see. That was after the Redwood Summer.

HOWARD: Right, the wild summer.

LAGE: Did you ever have any actual meetings of people from Earth First!, or, I guess the other organization was, EPIC?

HOWARD: No, we never had any official meetings with them, no.

LAGE: I know that they wanted you to endorse the Forest Forever Initiative.

HOWARD: The concept, yeah.

LAGE: That was 1990, also.

HOWARD: That was 1990.

LAGE: What was the league's thinking about that?

HOWARD: Well, it just seemed to me that I think we talked about it at the board meeting — maybe a couple board meetings. We decided that, hey, we've got our own policies. We've got our own mission. Why get involved with that? We just sort of pushed it to the side and politely told them we weren't interested.

LAGE: Another thing they seem to want you to do, [it seems] from the minutes, was not to negotiate with Pacific Lumber, over buying parcels.

HOWARD: Right, and that we would not accept. But it didn't do us much good because we didn't make any progress.

LAGE: [Laughter] big difference of that. It became really a federal, state, and environmentalist and Pacific Lumber Company negotiation — sounded tremendously complex.

HOWARD: It was.

LAGE: Did Save The Redwoods League get involved in any of that? Those machinations?

HOWARD: No, actually, we just sort of tippy-toed around the whole thing, keeping in close watch of what was going on, of course, but we just stayed on the outside fringes, and didn't really get terribly involved.

LAGE: That's great. What do you think about the outcome? Do you personally, or the redwoods league, embrace this idea of saving whole habitats?

HOWARD: I think any time, anybody can save redwoods, and set them aside and acquire them, that's the name of the game. That's the game we're in too. So, we certainly applauded that. Oh yeah.

LAGE: What about the spotted owl? You know, everything got mixed up in it — the marbled murrelet, and all that. Does that seem just like an excuse, or —

HOWARD: They were all just issues, and the panic of being the last of the redwoods and so forth all contributed to this higher and higher escalation of the price, which scared us to death.

LAGE: It came out to about five hundred million.

HOWARD: Oh, it's just incredible, just incredible. Well, anyway, the redwoods were saved.

LAGE: Right, seventy-five hundred acres of old growth, it sounds like.

HOWARD: Right, old growth.

LAGE: And a huge ecosystem. It's a very interesting —

HOWARD: It was a very interesting issue.

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