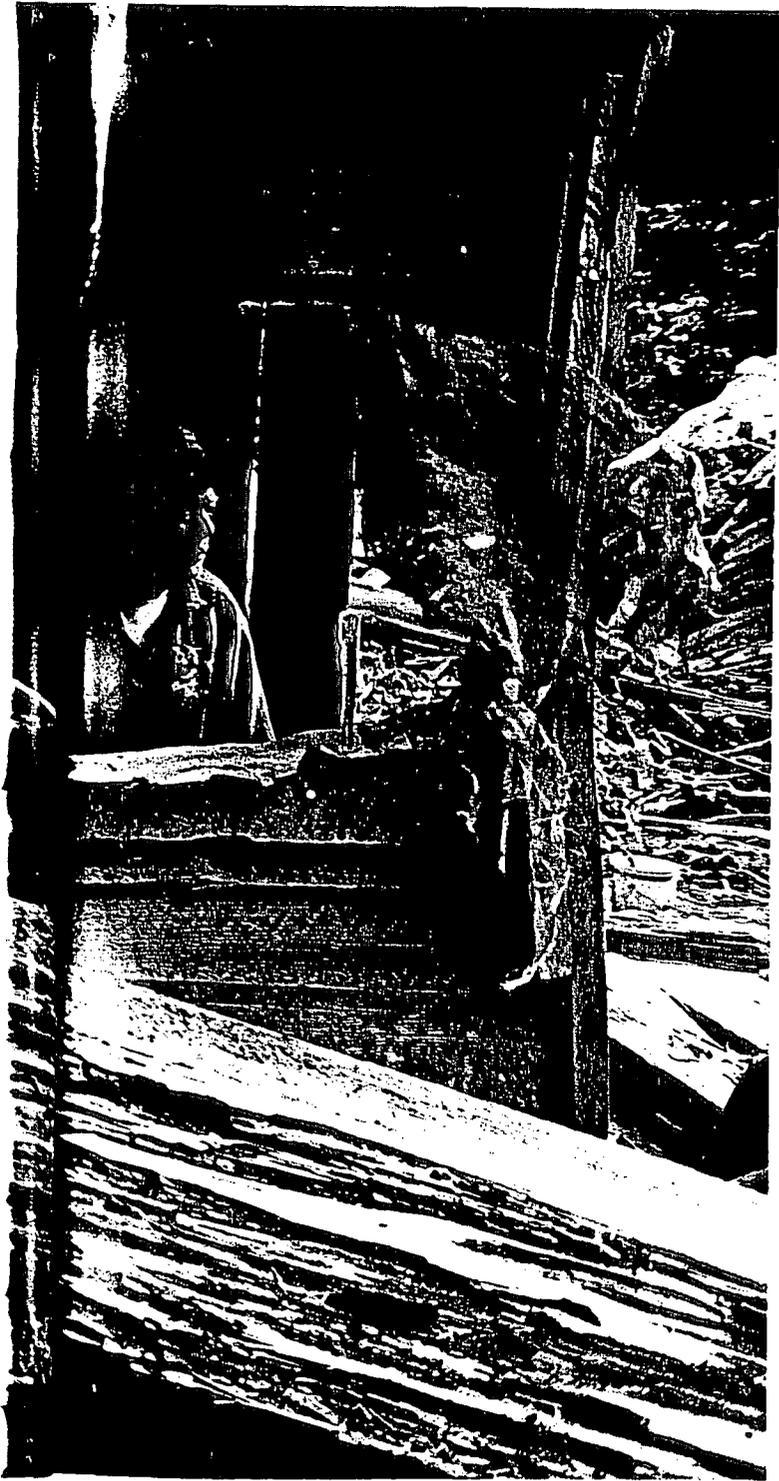


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*By Edwin Kiester jr.*

A new park saved the tall trees,  
but at a high cost to the community



Gus Peterson, 84, stands in the ruins of what once was his sawmill; park formation cut off his supply.

*Fifteen years after Redwood National Park attained its final size, the surrounding area is still searching for economic recovery*

The trees are house-tall now, reaching toward the 350-foot heights they may eventually attain. On once cutover slopes below the Tall Trees Overlook in California's Redwood National Park, the young redwoods now march downhill, to the bend in Redwood Creek where the world's tallest trees rise out of the mist. Green stripes of grasses and hardwoods mark where old logging roads have been bulldozed and the hill graded back to its natural contours. In the rushing waters below, salmon and steelhead trout can again head upstream to spawn.

Art Eck, deputy superintendent of the park, looks about him approvingly. The overlook's display of before-and-after photographs contrasts the scene with the hillside as it looked a few years ago: an ugly battlefield of stumps, slash and chewed-up earth crisscrossed by the gashes of roads and skid trails. Now, thanks to the restoration effort, the forest is returning to its past appearance, before the saws and axes came. "The land is healing," Eck says proudly. "But of course, some scars still show."

*Sentenced to hard times and heartbreak*

Yes, the scars of Redwood National Park do show, and not only on the greening hillsides above Redwood Creek. Twenty-five years after the establishment of the nation's first billion-dollar national park, 15 years after an expansion more than doubled its size (SMITHSONIAN, July 1978), the trees are coming back, but the painful wounds left by a bitter battle over the park formation remain raw in the lives of the people. Loggers and former loggers, businessmen selling to loggers, and local officials of California's two northernmost coastal counties insist that establishing the park with 78,000 acres of prime timberland triggered a downward economic spiral that stole good-paying jobs, savaged the timber industry and sentenced the area to chronic hard times and heartbreak: "We are fast becoming the Appalachia of the West," one ex-logger maintains. Environmentalists and champions who fought for the park maintain that the jobs would have been lost within a few years anyway, whereas the park saved magnificent and irreplaceable trees for generations to come. "The redwoods," says Lucille Vinyard, the Sierra Club's energetic North Coast representative, "are the pride of the nation."

John Dewitt of the Save-the-Redwoods League, which has spent \$75 million in 75 years to preserve ancient trees, is uncharacteristically emphatic about who is at fault in the argument. "Thousands of people are now being laid off in the computer industry in the Western United States because they just happened to have the misfortune of working on defense projects. Timber workers have had a habit of acting as crybabies for the last 100 years, anytime anything interfered with the simple task of cutting down trees. They lost jobs, but the taxpay-

*Photographs by Ed Kashi*

ers compensated them handsomely for it. People are tired of listening to their complaints."

To which Chris Rowney, resource manager for the timber company Louisiana-Pacific, replies, "The park cost 2,500 jobs. I know, the defense industry is laying off 70,000 workers. But for those 2,500 up here, and their families, the jobs were just as important as they are for defense workers. Losing them was just as painful."

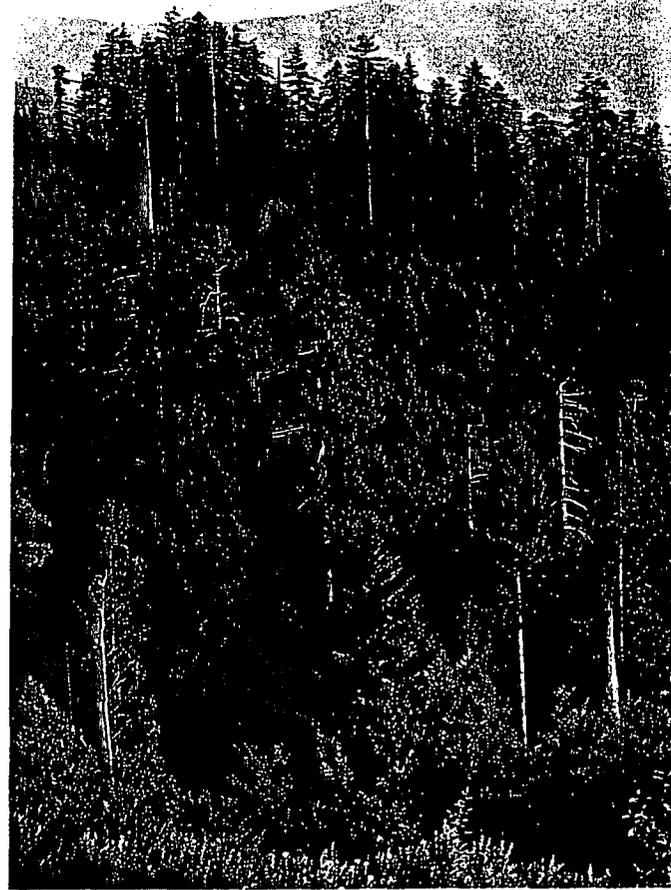
At a time when much of the country is suffering lost jobs, layoffs and recession, and the spotted owl show-down has brought timbering in the Pacific Northwest almost to a standstill, it is difficult to picture how much a park dedication in 1968 may have contributed to a moribund local economy in 1993. At first glance, California's beautiful and lonely North Coast, with its thick forests, rich pastureland, hidden valleys and spectacular surf-pounded beaches scarcely looks like a hardship case. Yet both the economic statistics and the mood in Humboldt and Del Norte counties are grim.

In Del Norte County, between 14 and 16 percent of the 9,600-person work force was unemployed in 1992. At \$22,917, Del Norte's average household income stood 56th among 58 California counties. In adjoining Humboldt County, the fastest-growing source of local income comes from transfer payments, such as welfare and Social Security. Inflation-adjusted household income in 1991 was lower than five years before, and 25 percent lower than the California average.

Federal, state and local government payrolls—highlighted by the new Pelican Bay maximum-security prison in Del Norte County and Humboldt State University in Humboldt—have replaced forest products as the major employer. Del Norte, which once resounded to the whine of 52 sawmills, is down to its last mill, the Miller Redwood Company, which last fall reduced operations to a single shift and now employs fewer than 125 people. During the 1992-93 rainy season, one of two remaining pulp mills in Humboldt County shut down, throwing another 262 persons out of work.

#### *A little logging town sure to profit*

Drive along U.S. Highway 101 through the once thriving community of Orick and you see economic distress at its absolute worst. Set in a lush valley and surrounded by parklands, the little logging town was pictured by park proponents as a potential tourist mecca, sure to profit from hordes of visitors who would flock to the nearby park. "They said we were going to have so many people up here in ten years that this little town wouldn't be able to handle them," recalls Pat Dorsey, a former county supervisor and owner of the town's social center, the Lumberjack Lounge. "Well, the park hasn't brought in a penny of business." Meanwhile, all but one of the town's sawmills closed. Population dropped from 1,500 to



From an overlook in the park, visitors see young trees (foreground) in an area that has been restored.





Older, taller redwoods grow beyond. Centuries from now, visitors will not be able to tell what was cut.



Lucille Vinyard (above) has spent the past 30 years of her life fighting for a redwood park. Art Eck (opposite), deputy superintendent, oversees restoration of land that was cut, left looking like a battlefield.

about 600—"and most of them are on welfare," Dorsey says. No tourist facilities were opened. In a final twist of irony, the park's visitor center was constructed on the site of one of the closed mills.

From the Lumberjack Lounge's front door, Dorsey, now a grizzled 83, looks out on sagging, paint-peeling houses and shops peddling redwood sculpture. "People call it 'the chain-saw massacre,'" Dorsey says. Even the Western Ancient Forest Campaign's director Jim Owens acknowledges, "The town was just left to wither and die."

Yet continue a few miles north and you can appreciate all the glory and magnificence of the great trees for which the original battles were waged. Bald Hills Road leads past Orick's last sawmill, then climbs steeply uphill to Lady Bird Johnson Grove. An easy foot trail winds among giants hundreds of years old, many as tall as a 20-story building and bigger in diameter than an oversize banquet table. Sunlight filters softly through the lattice-work of boughs overhead, dappling the forest floor below. The atmosphere is hushed; evergreen needles muffle every footfall. The grove has all the feeling of a Gothic cathedral, with pillars soaring to a vaulted ceiling. You half expect to hear the Angelus.

Beyond the grove, you reach the park of tomorrow—the National Park Service's proud restoration project. Rehabilitation has removed 180 miles of logging roads and skid trails, planted 684,363 trees and returned 26,330 acres to their natural state. Removal of logging debris and sediment has brought fish back to the streams, and wildlife to the woods and grasslands.

*"A magnificent stand of timber up there"*

The results to date are impressive. John A. Campbell, CEO of Pacific Lumber and one of the environmentalists' favorite villains, says admiringly, "Eventually, that's going to be a magnificent stand of timber up there." The project attracts foresters and environmentalists from all over the world. The park has been designated a World Heritage Site and an International Biosphere Reserve.

One criticism is undisputed: Redwood National Park is almost invisible to visitors. Highway signs welcome you to "Redwood National and State Parks," but, says John Dewitt, "Redwood National Park is like a ring without the setting." The real "gems"—"the finest redwoods that ever existed," Dewitt calls them—are in Prairie Creek Redwoods, Del Norte Redwoods and Jedediah Smith Redwoods state parks. Technically the 27,000 acres of old-growth redwoods in these parks are authorized by Congress to be within the national park's 106,000-acre boundaries. But the state parks are separately managed and their independence is jealously guarded.

The state parks are also more easily accessible from Highway 101, so few sightseers venture beyond them, preferring to meander among the giant trees of the state



A former lumber company employee, Shirley Brown now runs her own trucking company and acts as an



agent for others. Jay Barneburg (center) lost his logging job; now he's a guard at the new Pelican Bay prison.

park groves and to admire the herds of Roosevelt elk. In fact, the most popular visitor destinations in national park territory often aren't trees at all.

Assembling the park in two stages ten years apart prolonged the acrimony. The post-World War II building boom fueled a huge demand for redwood decks, paneling and picnic tables. By the 1960s, even locals became alarmed at the speed with which the ancient forests were disappearing. "Arcata Redwood was clear-cutting right down to Highway 101, near Prairie Creek [State Park]," recalls Lucille Vinyard, who promptly became an environmental activist. "It was hideous," she says.

In 1963, a National Geographic Society team discovered what it proclaimed the tallest tree in the world, measuring 367.8 feet, on timber-company land along Redwood Creek. The environmentalist movement, just beginning to gain strength, raised a cry to protect the tall tree and its neighboring giants, as well as additional old-growth redwoods, before it was too late.

Over the next five years, half a dozen proposals were made to carve a new national park out of old-growth redwood forests. Congress compromised on a park of 30,000 acres plus the state land and incorporating Tall Trees Grove. The final price paid to timber companies was \$210 million. Some federal land was swapped for private old-growth timber.

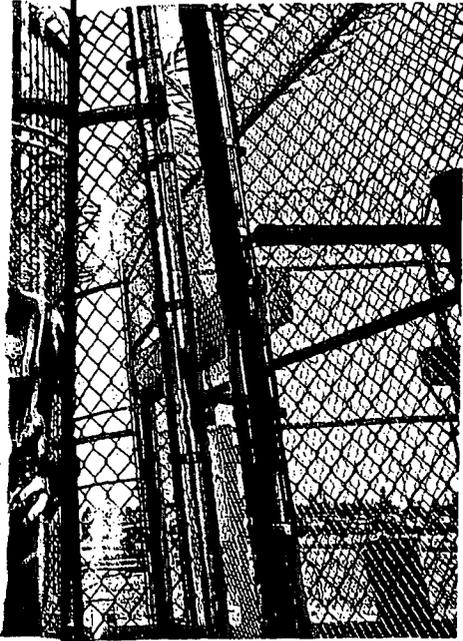
Instead of dying, the controversy worsened. As timber companies continued to clearcut the hillsides above Tall Trees, environmentalists protested that erosion, landslides and logging debris were threatening Tall Trees

and choking the streams, and lobbied Congress to vastly expand park borders.

The timber people erupted. Expansion, they argued, would remove some of the region's best timberland from production and take it off the tax rolls, with devastating effects on the timber industry, the local economy and local government—not to mention that it would throw large numbers of loggers out of work. In the end, however, a park expansion bill was passed by Congress and signed by President Jimmy Carter, adding another 48,000 acres to the park and establishing a 30,000-acre protection zone upstream from the big trees.

To placate the anguished locals, Congress sprinkled the bill with sweeteners. The U.S. Forest Service was directed to study increasing the timber harvest in nearby national forests to keep loggers at work. A revolving fund was set up to develop new businesses; federal funds underwrote a marina and an improved airport. The two counties were given compensating payments to make up for loss of taxes. A new freeway bypass was to be built around Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, to divert heavy highway traffic from "Blood Alley" where rubbernecking tourists and speeding logging trucks shared a road through redwood groves, and thus create construction jobs. The Park Service was directed to give priority to displaced timber workers in hiring.

*Californian Edwin J. Kiester jr. notes he often hugs the redwood growing in his backyard. His latest article in these pages was on apprentices.*



Only a few locals were hired for the high-paying jobs. Once the repair shop supervisor at a mill,



Donovan Tolman now makes a living working as a custodian for eight Mormon churches in the area.

The centerpiece of the bill was the Redwood Employees Protection Program (REPP), set up to ease the financial pain for workers whose jobs were taken away. Under a complicated formula that kept lawyers busy for ten years, displaced workers could receive severance pay, weekly benefits about equal to their paychecks, a combination of both or a retirement program.

"Short-service" workers who had spent five years or less in the industry received only severance packages. That meant a onetime payment of \$2,500 to \$4,000. Workers with more seniority typically received weekly stipends of \$225 to \$400 for up to 72 months, or severance ranging between \$32,000 and \$45,000.

Undeniably, REPP poured money into the troubled economy—lots of money. At its height in 1980, REPP was paying out \$250,000 a week in Humboldt County alone, making it by far the county's largest payroll. But even though young workers received nice nest eggs, and older ones a paycheck as large as if they were still working, many weren't happy about it—and they still aren't. If you want to hear lumberjack vocabulary at its sulfurous best, drop in at the Lumberjack Lounge and mention the words "park" or "REPP."

Charles Rankin, who worked for Arcata Redwood, was one of those immediately affected by the park expansion. Now a sprightly 75, Rankin was 59 then and had worked in the woods since he was 15. He had become a "faller," a chain-saw specialist who could expertly drop 300-foot trees precisely on a given spot with minimal damage to the valuable timber—one of the most skilled,

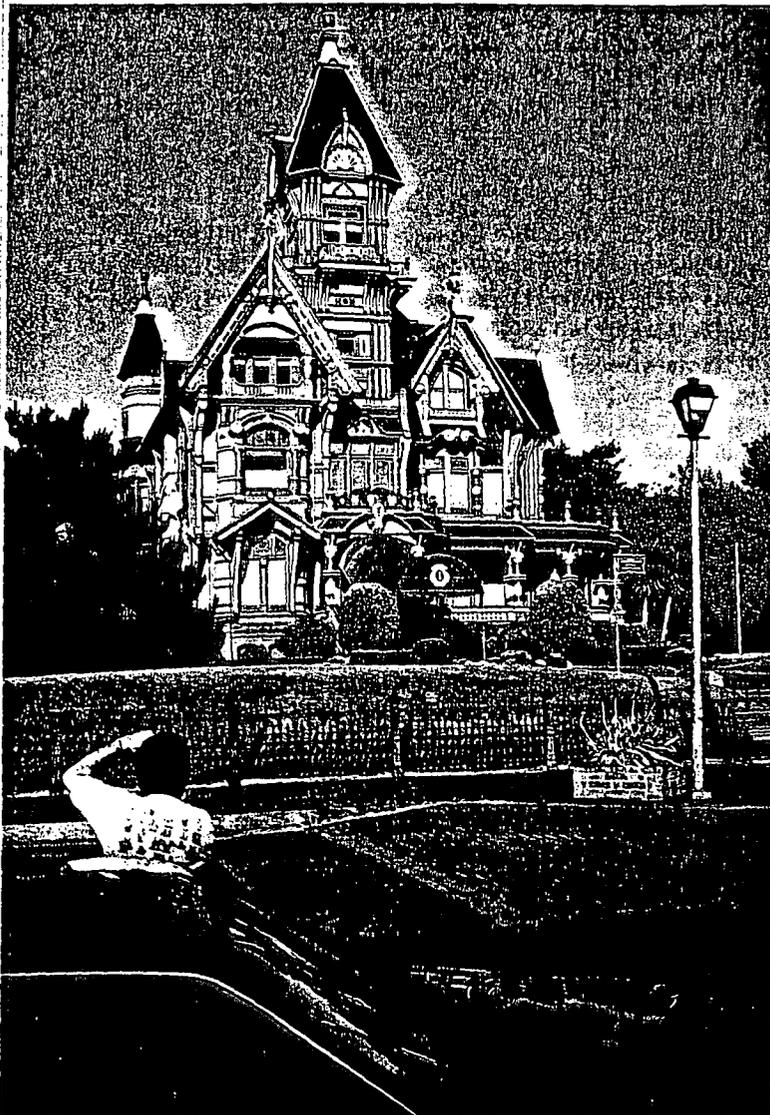
dangerous and therefore highest-paid jobs in the industry. When the park expansion took Arcata's old-growth forests near Redwood Creek, Rankin found himself out of a job.

"Arcata offered to send me to their land up by Klamath," he says, mentioning a town some 60 miles north of his home in Eureka. "That would have meant two hours' drive each way, a lot of it over logging roads and through the tourist traffic in the state parks." Rankin took his benefit check until he was 62, then "severanced out." He has held a few part-time jobs since, but has resigned himself to puttering around the house and playing seven-handicap golf. "No reason I couldn't have worked to 65," he declares. "I would have had six more years' contributions to my pension and qualified for higher Social Security. The park took that away from me."

Another former logger, who spoke on condition of anonymity, still spits out the word "park" angrily. "I went down to the unemployment office and they suggested I should go into retraining," he says bitterly. "They said, take a two-year course in computers. And then what would I have done? Hell, there probably weren't ten computers in all of Humboldt County."

Donovan Tolman, an earnest, friendly man of 49 who was in his 30s and a repair shop supervisor at a saw mill when the bill passed Congress, works now as a custodian for eight Mormon churches. Still, he's happy to have found a job that would at least keep him on the North Coast. "I couldn't think of leaving here," he says. "My dad and his dad cut trees to bring the highway into

*Saving the redwoods, courting hard times*



Mansion of timber baron William Carson has turned out to be more of an attraction than the park itself.

Crescent City. My roots are in this area. I'd rather starve than leave."

Although locals can fill you with stories about laid-off workers who squandered five-figure payoffs on speedboats or Mexican vacations, there were also success stories—those who used the money to carve out new lives. A beekeeper hobbyist, for instance, set up a business to provide pollination services to farmers and fruit growers. Shirley Brown is another success. Brown had worked for Simpson's personnel office computing laid-off employees' REPP eligibility, and then was laid off herself. She first took benefits "and watched my sons play basketball for a few months." Then, she won a hard-earned severance judgment. She invested in a truck and set up Shirley Brown Enterprises, negotiating trucking contracts for herself and 30-odd subhauers. She now has five office employees.

John Grobey, professor of economics at Humboldt State, shakes his head as he says that his most dire prediction, that the park would destroy the county's economic base, came true. "The taxpayers spent a lot of money, but not much came of it. Certainly not much benefited the people here. They feel betrayed."

After nine years of litigation, the federal government paid out \$688 million to three timber companies for land taken in the expansion. Interest and payments to small landowners drove the final purchase price above \$1 billion—three times the original estimate. The total bill for the jobs compensation program was \$120 million; \$233 million was set aside for the restoration projects. That was in addition to the \$306 million for the original park. Depending on whose figures you accept, Redwood National Park cost somewhere upwards of \$1.4 billion.

*Disappointments in retraining and tourism*

As for benefits to the local economy, Grobey notes, only a few displaced loggers joined the Park Service payroll, which today amounts to just over 170 employees. The freeway bypass contract went to a San Diego firm, which imported its own work crews. The increased cut in the national forests never materialized, and in fact quotas have dropped steadily, from 144 million board feet in 1985 to less than 11 million in 1993.

The retraining program was disappointing, partly because there were so few jobs to train for. Four hundred workers signed up, but only 115 completed their programs. Many were Humboldt State dropouts who now saw an opportunity to complete their education at government expense. More often, says Jim Yarbrough, retired publisher of the *Triplicate* in Crescent City, younger workers took the cash and departed.

Tourism has been the biggest disappointment, however. In the rosy scenario of the 1970s, the timber industry cutbacks were only to be a period of adjustment ushe-



The main street of Orick, once a thriving lumber town, has become a flea market for redwood novelties.

Hordes of visitors predicted by park planners never materialized, and the town's population has dropped.

ing in a new flood of tourism prosperity. Park advocates insisted that waves of tourists attracted to the newer, bigger park would more than compensate for the lost jobs in the woods and mills. Arthur D. Little, a management consulting firm, predicted a gain of 1.6 million visitors by 1983, and a total of 950,000 visitor-days above the numbers recorded by the state parks.

In fact, tourists have never arrived in anything like the promised numbers. Far from the projected million and a half tree lovers a year, tourist visits last year were estimated at 388,000—in a year when Yosemite, about 700 miles to the south, was overrun by well over three million.

The average visitor spends less than 50 minutes in the park. "What they get are park-and-pee visitors," sniffs John Miles of the Natural Resources Management Corporation (NRMC), an adviser on several early park proposals. "People stop, look up at the trees, go to the bathroom and drive on." Visitation is not helped by the park's lack of facilities. It has no tourist lodging and no drive-in campgrounds. Campsites can be reached only by strenuous backpacking.

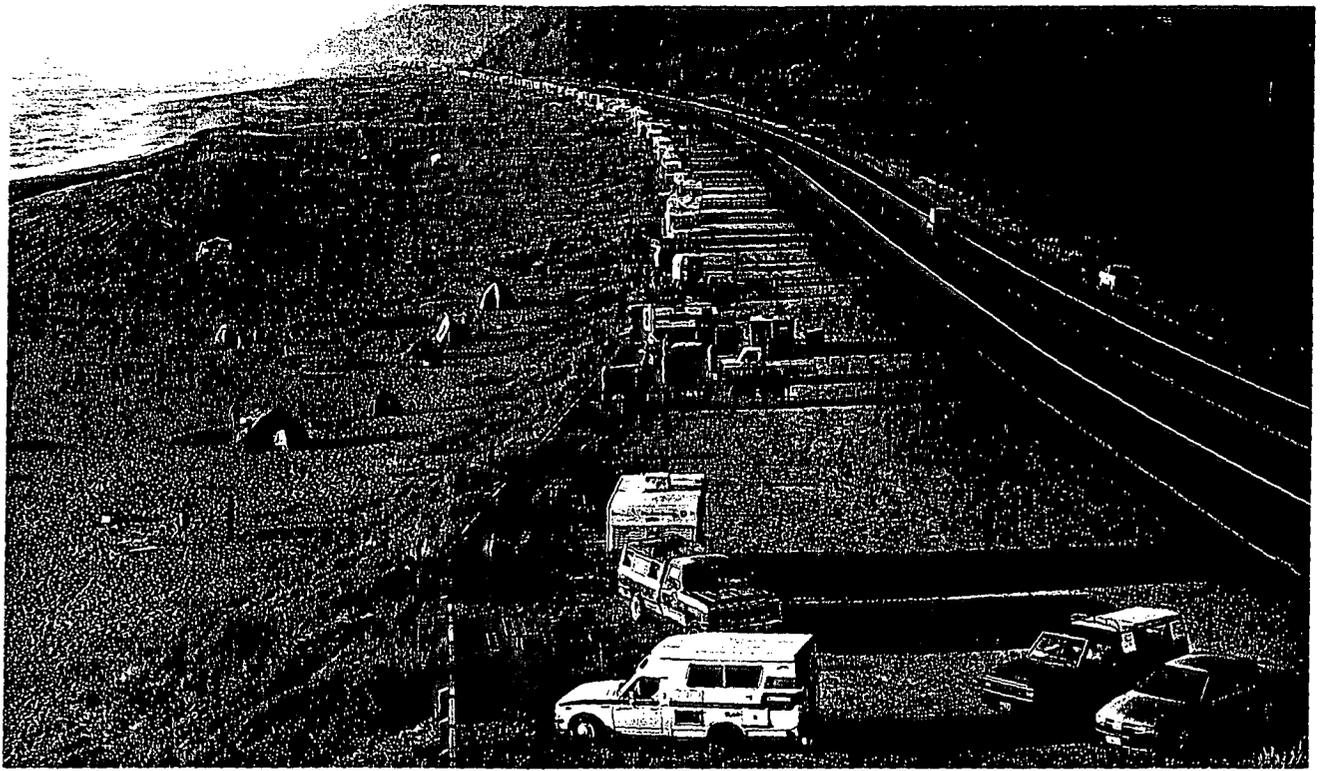
Although Humboldt County tourism has gradually inched upward and is now the county's fifth-largest industry, the park is not the primary lure. The big tourist draw is Eureka's restored Old Town and the gingerbread mansions of the timber barons, souvenirs of the conservation-be-damned, cut-and-run logging days of a hundred years ago.

Tourism has created a few jobs, but even Jim Owens

acknowledges, "It's hard to convince a man who made \$15 or \$20 an hour in a sawmill that he'll be better off working at Burger King." The average Humboldt County timber worker last year earned \$21,300. The average motel employee received \$11,500. Even then, most North Coast visitors are budget-minded, outdoors-loving families who camp in the state and county parks or head for the beaches.

Meanwhile, the area's protracted depression has brought another group of equally thrifty people. Attracted by the North Coast's spectacular scenery, rural lifestyle, clean air and—most of all—its rock-bottom housing prices, "equity immigrants" have sold their homes in Southern California's inflated real estate market and migrated north, where a four-bedroom house commanding an ocean view may cost less than \$100,000. Some retirees have put down what *Triplicate* editor John Pritchett calls "shallow roots." They set up oceanfront residence in trailers and motor homes during the cool summers, then flee south again when the four-month rainy season drenches the area with its annual 72 inches of precipitation.

As if the downturn in the timber industry weren't enough, the two counties have been hurt by a decline in what was once the second-biggest money earner—fishing. "Commercial salmon is all but dead around here," John Pritchett says. Sport fishing, which used to attract hundreds of vacationing fishermen, has declined precipitously, too. Offshore salmon are in dramatically short supply, and severe restrictions have been placed on fish-



Along U.S. 101 inside the park, thrifty visitors camp on the beach in good weather and leave during rainy

season. Retirees are buying houses in the area since prices are so low, but they do not spend much money.

ing. Environmentalists and commercial fishermen say the two problems are interrelated: fish can't get upstream to spawn because the streams are clogged with logging debris, so their numbers are dwindling.

The two counties have been further victimized by the go-go business atmosphere of the 1980s. All three of the major companies in the park expansion—Simpson Timber, Arcata Redwood (now part of Simpson) and Louisiana-Pacific—have gone through mergers, buyouts and privatizations that have resulted in consolidation and closing of mills. Louisiana-Pacific alone closed nine mills in five years (although officials say the closings were partly caused by logging restrictions).

Pacific Lumber, which was not affected either by the original park or the expansion, owns the largest stand of old-growth redwoods still in private hands. It was taken over in a hostile action by the corporate raider Charles Hurwitz and his Maxxam Corporation. The new owners speeded up cutting of old-growth, ostensibly to make up for undercutting in the past. They insisted they were benefiting the troubled economy, too, by providing more jobs. Environmentalists saw a different reason. They said cutting was increased to raise money to bail out Hurwitz's failed savings and loan institution.

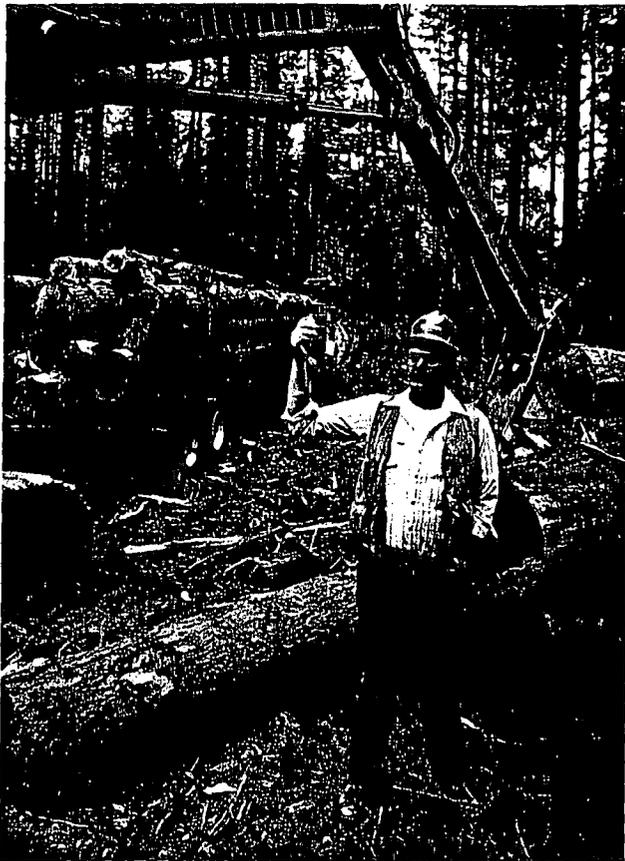
Not much of the \$889 million the first three companies received for their redwood holdings found its way into the local economy. A few smaller local mills were bought up, and Louisiana-Pacific opened one new (now closed) automated mill. Instead, investment went to

other parts of the country and Mexico. Company spokespersons insist that between the park expansion reducing the redwood supply, and the spotted owl controversy shutting down the national forests, California was not the soundest place to invest. John Cumming, an attorney who handled many of the severance cases, and John Dewitt of the Save-the-Redwoods League, contend, however, that the companies pitted their workers against the environmentalists, then took the money and left the workers high and dry.

To local residents, their plight can be explained as a simple matter of numbers. The 150,000 people of Humboldt and Del Norte counties comprise less than one-half of 1 percent of California's 30 million population. "[Southern Californians] sit down there on their redwood decks sipping their Chardonnay and write us off as a bunch of ignorant hicks in plaid shirts and cork boots," one ex-logger said in the Lumberjack Lounge, while other patrons nodded in agreement.

"You have to understand," says John Dewitt "that this area was truly America's last frontier. Until the late '30s, they were almost completely cut off. There wasn't even a decent connecting highway. It was really the last hurrah of Western migration and exploitation of resources. They had to whack down forests to get enough sunshine to settle and survive, and they think anyone from the outside doesn't understand their hardships. There's a real us-versus-them mentality."

The area's isolation has also hampered attempts to re



Chris Rowney, resource manager for Louisiana-Pacific, directs thinning of 70-year-old, second-growth trees.



Faller Steve Bachmann (on tree) and Richard Cox check growth rings on a newly felled 1,400-year-old redwood.

vive the economy by attracting new nontimber businesses. By the coastal highway, half of it frenetic two-lane, the nearest big cities of San Francisco and Portland are eight hours away. The route east, through the Coast Range to California's Central Valley, switches back 150 times in 50 miles. The only connecting railroad is subject to frequent washouts, and airline service is limited to 16 flights a day.

A few small mail-order businesses have been established, mostly employing part-time workers at minimum wage. The Bayshore Shopping Mall recently opened, providing more than 300 jobs. (But this gain was offset somewhat as Main Street stores closed their doors, unable to compete with the mall.) Worse, shopping-mall employees, too, are mostly low-paid part-timers. For a while, a growth industry was the cultivation of marijuana, before government raids burned off the fields.

*"Go here . . . you'll see the real biggies"*

The most notable bright spot in the dismal economic picture is the "super slammer" at Crescent City. Opened in 1989, the maximum-security Pelican Bay Prison houses 3,800 of California's most troublesome prisoners. Pelican Bay brought 1,170 high-paying jobs and a \$48 million annual payroll to the Crescent City area. Although only a few of the \$40,000 corrections officers' positions were filled by the locals, Crescent City picked up almost six additional service jobs for every ten prison employees.

Most of all, locals resent their image as rednecks who want to chop down every last tree and turn it into bookends. Loggers say they love the outdoors, and spend every possible minute among the trees fishing, hunting and camping; indeed, they say they know the forests better than anyone. When I told one logger that I was paying my first visit to the redwoods, he whipped out a map. "Go here, to Howland Hill Road," he said. "It's unpaved, and a lot of people miss it. But that's where you'll see the real biggies."

The \$115 million highway bypass, which was finally opened in 1992, was an ecological disaster, locals contend. Sixteen old-growth redwoods—the very trees the highway was built to save—were cleared from the state park's right-of-way. Streams were rechanneled, disturbing fish migration, and winter rains washed out excavation and caused landslides.

Feelings about the park have been unusually intense because redwood-growing land, as opposed to that of Douglas fir and other species, is sharply limited. In the United States redwoods grow only in a very narrow 500-mile-long strip of coastal California and extreme southwestern Oregon, nurtured by heavy winter rains and the drip from the fogs that shroud the coast in summer.

Timber companies see no reason not to act. "I get very frustrated when people talk about forest preservation



Pat Dorsey, 83 (second from left), and wife Alice chat with Eddie Roane sr. and jr. at the Lumberjack Lounge.

Louisiana-Pacific's Chris Rowney says. "There is a perception of the forest as something different from what it really is. Trees are biological beings, like people. They have a definite life span. Like people, they reach a certain point in their life cycle when they've matured and aren't really growing anymore. A 300-year-old redwood is actually rotting more than it is putting on wood. People talk as if all the redwoods were 2,000 years old. A 700-year-old tree is a rarity. An old-growth forest is at best a static forest."

Gary Rynearson of the NRMC adds, "People want to lock up the forests and expect them to stay just as they are. But forests don't stay 'just as they are.' They are always changing. Trees blow down, they are struck by lightning, they topple over from old age. In 1991 the Dyersville Giant, one of the most famous trees up here, fell over. It took several other trees with it. Young shoots will sprout up where those fell, and we will have a forest mosaic—young trees and older trees together. That's the life cycle of the forest."

But others maintain that the area's future lies in preserving trees, not cutting them. Laminated-wood technology makes the monster redwood beams and girders of the past obsolete. Steel, plastics and composite materials are taking the place of wood. According to this point of view, trying to keep the timber industry afloat is like subsidizing the buggy whip industry. The big trees are the North Coast's greatest asset—but as an attraction. If they are cut, the area will have neither timber workers nor tourists.

"Our interest is in protecting the antiquity of these forests and their uniqueness as an object that came down from 160 million years of evolution to the present time," John Dewitt says. "It's an approach quite differ-

ent from the economic approach. But we think beauty, esthetic value, uniqueness and environmental quality are important."

For all the bitter words, there are a few encouraging signs that the old animosities may be subsiding and the sides coming together. The Save-the-Redwoods League is attempting to serve as a bridge between the groups. "Of course, the definition of a bridge is something everybody walks on," Dewitt says. "But I think the idea is getting across that the objective is to solve a problem, not win a debate."

Some loggers have also come around. Earl Roberts is a former faller and logging contractor who now works for the Park Service. "A lot of my friends are bitter," Roberts says. "I tell 'em, the world changes and we have to change with it. The timber industry is dying. There aren't enough trees to be cutting at the rate we've been cutting. We've been using our resources much too fast. Anybody who's been around timber knows better."

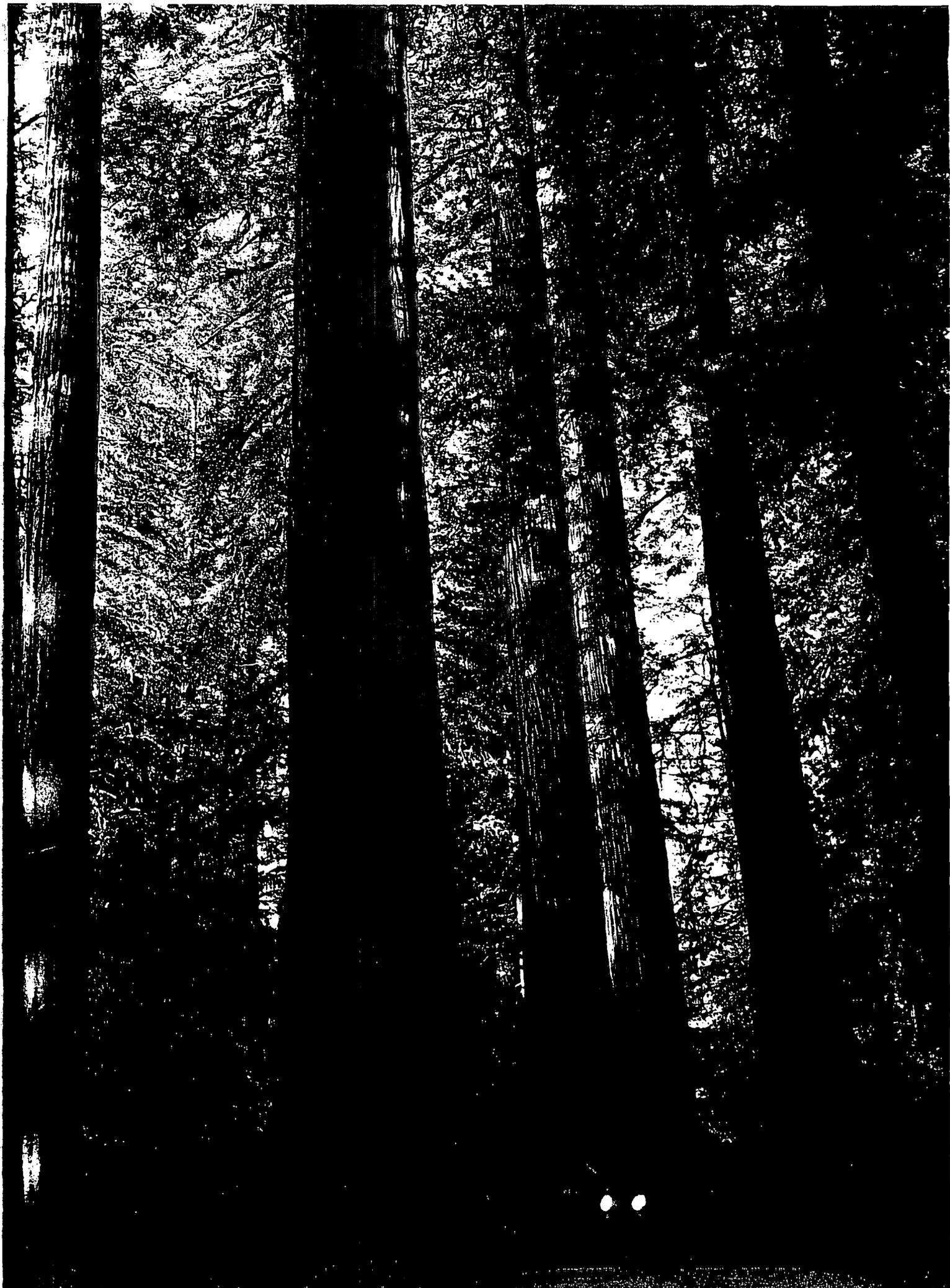
The park's current superintendent, Bill Ehorn, is given high marks by the local residents. Ehorn, who directed the establishment of California's Channel Islands National Park as a popular tourist destination, hopes he can similarly build up Redwood Park's appeal. He has made a point of cultivating local groups, leading tours into the park to show off the restoration and discussing future plans every chance he gets.

Recently, Ehorn distributed a solicitation to investors for a 75- to 100-bed lodge and conference center. "One of the problems here is that the park has no center," he says. "People never feel they have arrived." Having a comfortable place within walking distance of the trees would also attract groups and persuade visitors to lengthen their stays. He has been looking at sites near Orick, within view of elk herds and only a short stroll from redwood groves.

Ehorn explains: "I tell people here frankly, 'Look, the park's been here 25 years and it isn't going to go away. The timber industry will never be the same again, fishing is hurting, what is there for the future except tourism? The sooner we work together, the more we market together, the better off everyone will be. If we put the past behind us and cooperate, we can make Redwood Park a win-win situation.'"

Driving home past the decaying houses of Orick, and commiserating with the former loggers at the Lumberjack Lounge, however, it is not easy to see a rosy future. One can only conclude that, for the unhappy neighbors of Redwood National Park, a winning situation cannot arrive one moment too soon.

A car is dwarfed by some of the world's tallest trees in Jedediah Smith State Park inside the national park.



October 1993

# Smithsonian

Volume 24, Number 7

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