

Bruce Starker

1918-1975

Bruce Starker was a greatly respected forester, who helped create and advance a family tradition of innovative forest management and conservation that has spanned three generations of Starker foresters. An experienced woodsman as well as a well-educated, professional forester, he was at home both with loggers and foresters, and with scientists and businessmen.

The son of T.J. Starker, a noted Oregon educator and forester, Bruce Starker was caught up early in life with the lure of the forest. In the early 1930s, the elder Starker, then a professor in the Oregon State University School of Forestry, began buying logged over timberlands and replanting them. Bruce helped his father with these projects and learned first-hand the methods of reforestation and forest conservation, which are today the cornerstone of modern forestry. In 1940 he graduated from the Oregon State University School of Forestry, and in 1941 earned a master's degree in forest management from Yale University.

Soon after graduation his forestry career was interrupted, when he joined the U.S. Coast Guard. After attending officers school at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, he was made skipper of a sub chaser and later commanded a flotilla based in Rio de Janeiro.

Following his release from active service in 1946, he returned to Corvallis and using money saved during his military service, he bought his first piece of tree farming land, the Eisele place near Blodgett, Oregon. In the years to come, he acquired more land for reforestation, and with his wife Elizabeth Bond Starker, raised a third generation of Starker foresters, his sons Bond and Barte.

In 1971 the three generations of Starkers, all foresters and all graduates of Oregon State University, plus Elizabeth Bond Starker, formed a formal partnership called Starker Forests. Bruce Starker became the managing partner.

Throughout his career as a forester, Starker's main interest was forest management, which to him meant the maintenance of perpetual forests for both public and private use through reforestation and sound forest conservation practices. He was dedicated to the economics of private forestry and arranged a bequest to the Oregon State University Foundation to be used by the School of Forestry at Oregon State University for research in the economics of private persons or corporations growing timber trees, with special emphasis on developing an equitable theory or method of taxing forests or timberlands or timber-growing enterprises, which encourages the long-term management continuity which is so necessary for sound forest management. Through Starker Forests, he worked closely

with federal and state forestry research agencies, and with Oregon State University on such projects as: Douglas fir genetics (a particular interest of his), brush control, tree release methods, thinning and fertilizer projects. His interests were not limited only to his own holdings. He worked closely with both public and private forestland owners toward getting non-productive timberland back into production. Any idle forestland in Northwestern Oregon was of concern to him.

As a highly regarded forester and citizen, Starker was active in many community and forest industry organizations. He was a member of Private Lands Advisory Panel to the Pacific N.W. Forest and Range Experiment Station's General Technical Report PNW 33, "Forest Residues Management Guidelines for Pacific Northwest." He was a member of the Western Forestry and Conservation Association, was Benton County Chairman of Keep Oregon Green and was a Registered Professional Land Surveyor in the State of Oregon. From 1970 to 1972 he was chairman of the Oregon-Washington Reforestation Council. He also was a member of the Oregon-Washington Silviculture Council, was a trustee-at-large of the Oregon Forest Protection Association, a member of the Society of American Foresters, and the Xi Sigma Pi forestry honorary. In 1972, Governor Tom McCall asked him to serve on the Northwest Oregon Forest Practices Committee.

In 1970, he was made a director of Benton County Foundation for the benefit of youth. He also served on the United Fund Board and Budget Committee, was a member of the OSU Beaver Club and of the Corvallis Chamber of Commerce.

On July 27, 1975, Bruce Starker died tragically when his plane crashed while he and his son were inspecting timberland prospects and Starker Forests holdings. His son Bond survived the crash and became managing partner of Starker Forests.

Bruce Starker was an independent thinking, adventuresome man. Throughout his life he fostered a great respect for the land, a willingness to try new ways, and a desire to live life to the fullest.