

Judi Bari Lives!

Fifth Estate Collective

1997, Summer

“My ideals will live long after I am dead.”

—Emma Goldman

In a moving memorial to his dear friend and comrade Judi Bari (in the March 1997 *Earth First! Journal*), Darryl Cherney writes that he was plagued by a number of unsettling signs before her death, including the crash of an enormous old-growth redwood to the forest floor on a windless night near the Earth First! base camp in Myers Flat, California. That redwood turned out to be Judi Bari, whose death meant not only a terrible loss to her children and her family, to her community and the movement, but to the earth. Judi Bari was one of those exceedingly rare and irreplaceable individuals who appear when social conditions call them up. Her organizational creativity, her pragmatic common sense, her energy, her humor, her sterling principles, her steadfast will and her extraordinary courage were inspiring to us all. She made every moment count—not only for the movement to save the planet and a human community worth living in, but, as we are told as well by those who knew her personally, for her children, friends and community.

The land-killers at Maxxam and other corporate headquarters were surely popping the champagne corks when they heard the news of her death, because Judi, more than any other person in recent memory, was able to strike fear into the hearts of the people responsible for liquidating America's forests. Like others who have challenged their power, they saw her as a threat and that was why they tried to kill her. Their bomb and their other attempts (like trying to run her and her young daughters off the road) to silence and stop Judi failed. Told she'd never walk after being permanently disabled by the bombing, she struggled and eventually did walk. But in the end she was felled by the chemical roulette presently undermining life everywhere, from the maples in the eastern forests to the seals in the NA 1990 Earth First! Redwood Summer blockade. Judi Bari's key role led to the attempt on her life. The annual EF! Round River Rendezvous will be June 27-July 6 in Wisconsin's Nicolet National Forest. Contact the RRR committee at 731 State St., Madison WI 53711; (608) 250-8378 or see the next EF! Journal for information.

We always admired Judi Bari's accomplishments and her dedication. We also respected her original mix of blue collar militance and deep ecology. We especially admired her spirit. When Peter Werbe interviewed her on his radio program here after her cancer had been disclosed, she sounded matter-of-fact and tough when talking about recent Earth First! actions. Friends in California have told us that she sounded perfectly well talking on her own local radio show in

the weeks before her death. We heard she was strong and buoyant to the end. Movement friends tell us that as death approached, she quoted after IWW martyr Joe Hill, "Don't mourn, organize." But Darryl reported to a friend here in Detroit that what Judi had actually said with a laugh to hippie Earth First! friends was, "Don't Om, organize."

Emma Goldman once remarked, "Life without an ideal is spiritual death." Judi Bari's body lies dead but she was not silenced. Her message and the memory of her exemplary life will last as long as the vision of a free society in harmony with the natural world does. Her Friends will carry on the real work to which she gave her life. And others will appear who are needed. But we cannot wait for them to appear. We must find ways to carry on, for Judi, and for ourselves. We need to make every moment count.

Our condolences go out to Judi's family and friends. Besides staying active, people can memorialize her by donating to the Judi Bari Trust Fund (for her two daughters) c/o the Mendocino Environmental Center, 106 West Standley, Ukiah CA 95482 (checks earmarked to the fund), or to the Redwood Justice Fund (to support Darryl's and Judi's lawsuit against the FBI) at P.O. Box 14720; Santa Rosa CA 95402. The FE Bookstore is selling copies of her book, *Timber Wars* (Common Courage Press), all proceeds go to the Redwood Justice Fund. We hope to organize a benefit for it this summer.

—D.W.

Judi in Her Own Words

On Redwood Summer:

"We radicalized a lot of people...As far as Earth First! goes, this was the longest, largest, most sustained campaign that we've done. The Fort Bragg demonstration [on July 21, 1990 at Georgia-Pacific's pulp mill] was the largest demonstration that Earth First! has ever had in this country.

"Did we stop the logging? No, we didn't stop the logging. They cut twenty years worth of trees [that] summer. But we brought this issue to national attention, to international attention on a scale that it's never been done before...I think the contention that 'you didn't stop the logging' is a ridiculous statement. They never went up to each anti-war demonstration during the Vietnam era and said, 'The movement failed because you didn't stop the war with this particular demonstration!' It's not a question of a particular demonstration... It's more of a cumulative effect. And I think that we've really raised the level of awareness, raised the whole stakes through Redwood Summer to a level that it never was before."

On environmentalism and elitism:

"The [environmental movement] tended to be privileged people. Dave Foreman's a perfect example. They want to save wilderness so they can enjoy it on backpacking trips, which in itself is a class privilege. Black people in the ghetto don't worry about wilderness because, number one, they can't get to it, and number two, the issues of survival are so predominant for them...So even worrying about wilderness is a class privilege in this society.

"When the environmental movement began it was primarily focused on saving scenery. But the destruction of the earth has reached such proportions that it's threatening the very life support systems,...The destruction of the earth is becoming a primary issue for poor and working people, too, because they have to bear the brunt of it. Anything that gets destroyed the rich people pass down the line..."

"Our society has been built on the exploitation of both the lower classes and the earth. I would differ from Marx there. Marx says that all value derives from labor. I think that he's incorrect...that value derives from labor and the earth. And profits are gained by not paying the

workers the value of their labor, and by taking from the earth in a manner that doesn't replace it..."

On why she became a radical environmentalist:

"I found myself looking at truckload after truckload of Redwood trees being hauled out of the forest. Thousand-year-old trees that take up the whole truck, all the way-down to tiny little trees six inches across that they are using to feed the chip mills. And it was an appalling sight....It is really hard to sit there and witness the destruction of the forest. You become obsessed with it."

On Earth First! women:

"One of the things we accomplished in Redwood Summer is what I refer to as the feminization of Earth First!... We're not just trying to depose the male leadership. We're trying to change the style of leadership so that it's a collective style and not dependent on glorifying individual personalities..."

"The former strategies of Earth First! included a reliance on individual acts of bravado. That was the basic strategy. We'll get some brave guy to climb way up in a tree and we'll get in the newspaper for it. Or we'll sneak around in the night and sabotage bulldozers... And that whole little macho scenario wasn't designed for mass organizing... As one friend of mine so aptly worded it, 'The question is, is it earth first or Earth First! first?' These people see it as this little clique, and they want to preserve its purity at the expense of its effectiveness. The question to me is, 'Do we want to save the planet, or do we want to form a little elite corps?' If we want to save the planet, we need to address root causes, including patriarchy and the destructive, exploitative society. We can't separate it..."

On her "woman-identified" radical feminism:

"I have the unfortunate experience of being born heterosexual, loving women and not being able to stand men. The night before the bombing, I told Darryl [Cherney] that he'd better change the slide show because it was too male-identified, and that a lot of the organizers in Santa Cruz were lesbians. And he said something like, 'Well not all of the organizers are lesbians.' I replied, 'Yes, Darryl, only the lucky ones.'"

On the FBI:

"The FBI asked what they-could do to regain my trust. I said they could find the bomber and fire him."

On her music:

"One of the things that attracted me to Earth First! was its use of music. It is a tremendously powerful thing that brings out the spirit and joy of the movement. We are trying to create a better world where there is more joy; there isn't much joy in a world of clear cuts and layoffs. Finding my body broken, my life disrupted, snatched away from my rural environment and taken away from my family, one of the only ways I have been able to endure is to be able to play music. I am not as bad off as I was during the six weeks [after the bombing], but there [were] some real times of despair for me there, and sometimes the only thing that would pull me through was playing music."

On efforts to build an alliance with mill workers:

"Mill workers and loggers have told me they think I was the target [of the bombing] because I was able to draw a connection and actually work together with them. Most of the work that I did with them was anonymous, and it was very serious work. It was not the kind of thing that got into the media at all—ever. I tried to find the people who were already radical, and all that I tried to do was offer them a space in the movement so they could organize themselves."

On class society and the fate of the earth:

“The lower classes are getting much more poisoned than the upper classes. But [this is] not really a class struggle in the traditional way, although I certainly think that class society is the cause of the problem and the upper classes, not the lower classes, are to blame. However, we’re not trying to fight for the elevation of one particular class of humans over another class of humans.

“We’re trying to learn to live on the earth in a way that doesn’t destroy the earth, in a society that recognizes equal rights, not only of all people but of all species. It’s different from other class struggles in that the Wobblies, for example, were fighting for the benefit of the working class. Well, if they continue the way they’re doing, Charles Hurwitz is going to be just as dead as we are. And Harry Merlo’s kids are going to inherit just as bad of a world. So environmental destruction ultimately cuts across class lines. That doesn’t mean we need to organize among the ruling class and the yuppies. We need to organize among the people who are not benefiting from it, and that’s the lower classes....

“One of the results of Redwood Summer is that these issues have been raised, including the issue of who is at fault. So what followed Redwood Summer was ‘Corporate Fall’ [which was followed by ‘Nuclear Winter’ at the Nevada Test Site]. We held a demonstration in September after Louisiana-Pacific went in and logged Osprey Grove by the Navarro River [an old-growth forest which environmentalists were negotiating to buy]. We listed LP’s corporate crimes, and we said that the individuals need to be held responsible—that this isn’t a faceless corporation. Our slogan is: ‘[The earth’s] not dying, it’s being killed. And the people who are killing it have names and addresses!’ That’s ‘a quote from [IWW songwriter] Utah Phillips...

“[Workers] have good reason to be scared. But what I’m seeing among some of the timber workers is more criticism of the corporations than before. There’s an opportunity to rebuild the alliance that we had started to build before, and I hope to be able to work on that. It’s not glory work, it’s not publicized... it’s slow, and I think that’s the most important work that I can do.”

On the bombing:

“We know that the system is enforced by violence. And if we are effectively challenging the system then it’s not surprising that they’re going to use violence against us. The people from the American Indian Movement said, ‘Violence isn’t a choice for us. It’s like the weather. It just happens.’ It’s part of the powers that be, and it’s some thing that we’re trying to change about this society. But with that knowledge of what this society is and how brutal they really are, if as soon as they start doing that to us we drop out then we’re defeated.

“I don’t see how we can support the people of El Salvador and be so easily intimidated fighting the battles here. I’m not trying to take away from El Salvador solidarity work... I was regional coordinator for the Pledge of Resistance. But I think we are effectively helping the people of El Salvador by fighting the battles here. Okay, well how can we do that if all they have to do is the slightest thing to us and we back down?

“When I look at the courage of the comrades in El Salvador, when I look at the people in South Africa and the things they have to put up with, then our problems pale by comparison and we are still very privileged. And if we are serious about it... I mean the alternative is that they are going to kill the earth and everything on it!... Either we are going to stand up to them or everything is going to go. We need to exhibit both personal and collective courage because that’s the only way we are going to survive. I think our collective safety is more important than our personal safety. And the fate of the forest is more important than the fate of me... And if I stop doing it then they don’t have to kill me. They’ve succeeded.”

Web archive note: All brackets are in the original.

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