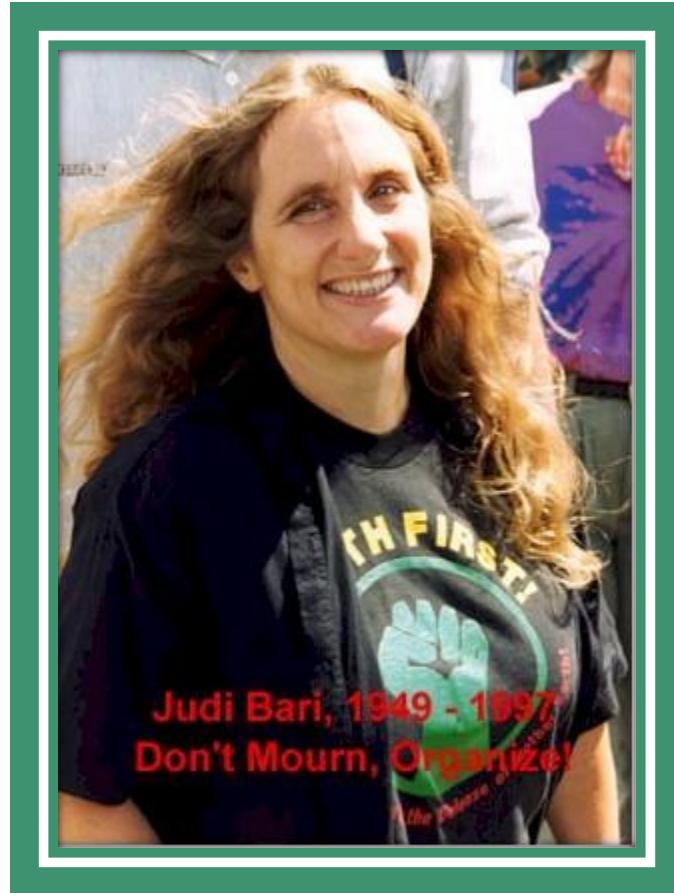


Introduction



“The arc of history is long, but it bends towards justice.”

—Martin Luther King Jr.

“I know, I know. I need to write a book about all this. Fighting to save the redwoods, building alliances with the loggers, getting car bombed and finding out what we’re up against not just the timber industry but also the FBI. Then coming back home and ending up back on the front lines again. I fully intend to write about it eventually, but it’s hard to write about something when you’re still in the middle of it.”

—Judi Bari, introduction to Timber Wars, 1994

"All this," is a very complex and intriguing story (not to mention a call to action), and while most people have never heard it, a great many are at least partially aware of its defining moment.

On the morning of May 24, 1990, two activists, Judi Bari and her friend and comrade Darryl Cherney, set out from Oakland, California, while on a tour to organize support for a campaign they had organized called Redwood Summer. They were part of the radical environmental movement known as Earth First!, which had a reputation for militant tactics, including the sabotaging of logging and earth moving machinery as well as spiking trees—the act of driving large nails into standing trees in order to deter logging operations. The previous year in Arizona, five environmentalists, including Peg Millett and Earth First! cofounder Dave Foreman, had been arrested and charged by the FBI for a conspiracy to sabotage power lines in protest against nuclear power. Some welcomed Earth First!'s uncompromising reputation. Others denounced them as reckless, or even as terrorists.

According to the mainstream media, Earth First!'s radical agenda earned them the animosity of the timber workers whose jobs the environmentalists supposedly threatened. They were described as "outside agitators" (among many other things) who had "polarized" the timber dependent communities of northwestern California's redwood region—historically known as the "Redwood Empire", but more recently as the "North Coast"—with their militant and uncompromising "environmental extremism." Their alleged hard-line anti-logging stances were seen as too extreme even by most environmentalists, and they supposedly stood upon the radical fringes of the ecology movement. Redwood Summer was reportedly planned as a summer-long campaign of direct actions by these "fringe" environmentalists to thwart the harvesting of old growth redwood timber in northwestern California, specifically Humboldt, Mendocino, and Sonoma Counties.

On May 24, however, Bari's and Cherney's planned destination was Santa Cruz County, where—just one month previously—power lines had supposedly been sabotaged by unknown perpetrators calling themselves the "Earth Night Action Group". Just before 11:55 AM a bomb in Bari's car exploded, nearly killing her and injuring Cherney. Within minutes the FBI and Oakland Police arrived on the scene and arrested both of them as they were being transported to Highland Hospital. The authorities called them dangerous terrorists and accused the pair of knowingly

transporting the bomb for use in some undetermined act of environmental sabotage when it had accidentally detonated. The media spun the event as the arrest of two potentially violent environmental extremists.

* * * *

In truth, however, Bari and Cherney were innocent. Earth First! was radical and militant, certainly, but they were also steadfastly nonviolent. Redwood Summer, far from being a campaign of terror, was modeled after Mississippi Freedom Summer and its original name was Mississippi Summer of the California Redwoods. The organizers of the latter had already renounced the tactic of tree spiking and had adopted a strict nonviolence code, based on a similar one adopted by the SNCC in the former. They had routinely been the *victims* of violence but had consistently answered that with *nonviolence*. Further, Redwood Summer was *not* anti-logging or even anti-worker. It was anti-*corporate* logging, and it sought—among other things—to draw attention to the *plight* of timber workers who were, according to Judi Bari, as much the victims of the clearcutting and liquidation logging practiced by the three principal timber corporations dominating the region (Georgia Pacific, Louisiana Pacific, and Pacific Lumber) as the forests themselves.

Bari and Cherney were not only Earth First!ers, they were dues paying members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Wobblies, who had—in 1917—won the eight hour day through their radical point-of-production oriented unionism in spite of incredible opposition from the timber corporations *then*. Indeed, even some of the timber workers whom the media claimed were the sworn enemies of Earth First! were also members of the IWW and covertly working with Bari and Cherney. There were even a handful of timber workers who had openly declared their alliance with Earth First! and their support of Redwood Summer.

Furthermore, Bari and Cherney were completely unaware that they had been transporting an armed explosive, and investigations soon proved that the bomb was most likely intended to murder Bari while at the same time make it *look* like she had been knowingly transporting it to use in some act of industrial sabotage (even though it actually *wasn't*). Following the bombing, the FBI and Oakland Police went to desperate lengths to try and "prove" the bombing victims were guilty, even to the point of providing false leads and manufacturing evidence. As for the Arizona

arrests, these had been a clear case of entrapment by the FBI, by its own admission, and one of the organizers of the action that had led to the arrests had been an undercover FBI agent who had infiltrated Earth First! with the expressed purpose of discrediting the environmental movement. The bombing of Bari and Cherney had eerily similar “footprints” all over it.

* * * *

Why did all of this happen and who bombed Judi Bari? The organizers of Redwood Summer (which included Earth Firsters, Wobblies, environmentalists, labor union members, and activists of all stripes—most of them residents of the North Coast) as well as historians have tried to answer both questions ever since that fateful day.

“Who” remains unknown as of the writing of this book, a process which began in the months following Bari’s death on March 2, 1997, seven years after the bombing due to inoperable cancer. Many hypotheses have been put forward, but still no one has a complete answer, and people disagree on those theories.

IWW singer and songwriter Utah Phillips, a close friend and ally of Bari and Cherney had once told them, “The Earth isn’t dying, it’s being killed, and the people killing it have names and addresses.” Darryl Cherney, himself an adept and clever songsmith, took those words to heart and penned the following lyrics that pointed fingers and named names of the possible suspects, a song which he titled, “Who Bombed Judi Bari?”

*Now Judi Bari is a union organizer¹,
A Mother Jones at the Georgia-Pacific Mill,
She fought for the sawmill workers,
Hit by that PCB spill.
T. Marshall Hahn’s calling G-P shots from Atlanta,
Don Nelson sold him the union long ago,
They weren’t gonna have no Wobbly,
Running their logging show³
So they spewed out their hatred,*

¹ Detailed in Chapter 11.

² Detailed specifically in Chapter 14 and 26.

³ Detailed in Chapters 14, 19, and 26.

⁴ Detailed in Chapters 35 and 36.

⁵ This is a conflation of *Ukiah Daily Journal* and *Willits News*, two publications of roughly similar, small-town, moderately conservative political orientation, composited here to fit the meter and rhyme.

⁶ Detailed in Chapters 12 and 37.

⁷ Detailed in Chapters 30-35.

*And they laid out their scam,
Jerry Philbrick called for violence⁴,
It was no secret what they planned;*

Chorus:

*So I ask you now...
Who Bombed Judi Bari?
I know you’re out there still
Have you seen her broken body
Or the spirit you can’t kill?*

*Now Judi Bari is a feminist organizer,
Ain’t no man gonna keep that woman down,
She defended the abortion clinic,
In fascist Ukiah town;
Cahary Baptist Church called for its masses,
Camo-buddies lined up in the pews,
You can see all of their faces,
In the Ukiah Daily News⁵;
And they spewed out their hatred,
As Reverend Boyles laid out their scam,
Bill Staley called for violence,
It was no secret what they planned⁶;*

Chorus

*Now Judi Bari is an Earth First! organizer,
The California Redwoods are her home,
She called for Redwood Summer,
Where the owl and the black bear roam⁷;
Charlie Hurwitz he runs MAXXAM out of Houston⁸,
Harry Merlo runs L-P from Portland town⁹,
They’re the men they call King Timber,
They know how to cut you down;
And Shep Tucker¹⁰ spewed their hatred,
As Candy Boak laid out their scam¹¹,
John Campbell called for violence¹²,
It was no secret what they planned;*

Chorus

*Now Judi Bari is the mother of two children,
A pipe bomb went ripping through her womb,*

⁸ Maxxam acquired Pacific Lumber in a hostile takeover in 1985. Detailed throughout this book, beginning with Chapter 4.

⁹ L-P is Louisiana Pacific. Detailed throughout the book, beginning with Chapter 3.

¹⁰ In some variations, the name mentioned is “Don Nolan” rather than “Shep Tucker”. Shep Tucker was a spokesman for L-P

¹¹ Detailed in Chapters 12, 16, 32, 33, 35, and 36.

¹² John Campbell was the Vice President of Lumber Production and later the President of Pacific Lumber. The threat is mentioned specifically in Chapter 33.

*She cries in pain at night time,
In her Willits cabin room;
FBI is back again with COINTELPRO,
Richard Held is the man they know they trust,
With Lieutenant Sims his henchman,
It's a world of boom and bust;
But we'll answer with non-violence,
For seeking justice is our plan,
And we'll avenge our wounded comrade,
As we defend the ravaged land¹³;*

Chorus (x2)¹⁴

Judi Bari attempted to solve the mystery herself while continuing to fight to save the redwood forests of the North Coast as well as fight for the livelihoods of the timber workers and challenge the timber corporations that she and the other organizers of Redwood Summer were liquidating the very forests upon which the economy and ecology of the North Coast depended. Bari never got around to writing her book, though she was able to cobble together a collection of her shorter writings in a compilation which she named *Timber Wars* (after an article she wrote for the *Industrial Worker*, the official newspaper of the IWW seven months before the bombing) and self published in 1993, until a small left-liberal publisher, Common Courage, of Monroe, Maine agreed to produce it commercially in 1994.

Timber Wars shed much light on who and why, but (by Bari's own admission), it fell short of fully answering the questions completely. She was convinced that the bombing was part of a conspiracy involving the three timber corporations (referred to often in this book as "Corporate Timber" collectively for the sake of clarity) with at least the complicity (and quite possibly the involvement) of the FBI, at least, and quite possibly the agency's *involvement*. The expressed purpose of the conspiracy was to discredit her, Earth First!, its allies, and Redwood Summer. Bari offered ample evidence to support her conclusion, but her theories were incomplete, even if verifiable, and many of her critics pooh-poohed them.

In spite of Bari's writings, there were some who still insisted—in spite of the overwhelming evidence *against* the possibility (presented in this book, of course)—that either Bari or Cherney, or both of

them, were indeed guilty and somehow managed to hoodwink all of their family, friends, and allies into believing that they were innocent. Such theories were and are easily disproven.

There were those who believed that Bari and Cherney had been targeted by a lone nut, perhaps a political reactionary, such as ex-NFL football player, Bill Staley, who disdained the two activists' radical environmentalist and leftist political orientation. Certainly both Bari and Cherney accepted that this was indeed a possibility, but an unlikely one given the lengths to which the FBI and Oakland Police attempted to frame the bombing *victims* as the bombing's *suspects*.

Meanwhile, some suggested that the bomber was somebody close to either one or both of the pair, perhaps an activist who had a personal score to settle with either or both of them, or perhaps an ex-lover. For example, following Bari's death, some theorized that Judi Bari's ex husband, Mike Sweeney, might have been the bomber. The first person of any significance to propose this theory was liberal documentarian, and former child actor Steve Talbot (most famous for his role as "Gilbert" on *Leave it to Beaver*) in his decent, though still very flawed documentary "Who Bombed Judi Bari?" which aired on PBS TV station KQED in San Francisco in May of 1991. However, Bari *herself* dispelled this theory simply by pointing out that "Mike was taking care of my children at his girlfriend's house when the bomb was planted, and she can verify that Mike did not leave her house at any time when he would have had an opportunity to place the bomb."¹⁵ Bari was nothing if not highly intelligent and precise in her logic.

Bari and Cherney were convinced enough to sue the FBI and Oakland Police for discrimination and wrongful arrest, violations of their First and Fourth Amendment Rights. The case took over 11 years to run its course, involving much discovery—despite constant stonewalling (through the use of procedural motions intended to delay, misdirect, and bog down the case as much as possible) by the FBI. Though Bari did not live to witness the outcome, on June 11, 2002, a federal jury returned a stunning verdict in favor of Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney in their landmark civil rights lawsuit against four FBI agents and three Oakland Police officers and awarded them

¹³ Detailed in Chapters 18, 36 and 37.

¹⁴ Who Bombed Judi Bari?, lyrics by Darryl Cherney, featured on the album *Timber*, © by Darryl Cherney, 1991, and also *Who Bombed Judi Bari?* © by Darryl Cherney 1997, and in the IWW's *Little Red Song Book*, 36th edition, published by the IWW Hungarian Literature Fund,

1995 (this last source juxtaposes verses three and four and misspells "Earth First!" as "Earthist".)

¹⁵ "Who Bought Steve Talbot?", by Judi Bari, *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, May 29, 1991.

\$4.4 million in damages. Nowhere in the case did either side suggest that Bari's ex husband had *any* role in the bombing.

Still, the theory that Sweeney was the bomber has taken on a life of its own, generating much controversy in recent years. A group of Bari's former associates—including *Anderson Valley Advertiser* editor and publisher, Bruce Anderson (the name is coincidental) and the late leftist intellectual Alexander Cockburn—have banded together and even gone as far as claiming that Bari had *known* that Sweeney had planted the bomb in her car but dared not speak out of fear for her life, because her ex husband was violently abusive towards her (hence their divorce), and/or he had some secret knowledge about criminal acts that he, himself, had carried out with Bari's complicity, thus making her an accomplice to a crime. Anderson, et. al. claimed that the lawsuit against the FBI and Oakland Police was a smokescreen to cover up their *own* conspiracy. They argued that the only reason why the FBI and Oakland Police had been found guilty at all was due to their own incompetence. The advocates of this theory claimed for several years after Bari's death that they would expose the "truth" of this claim and their efforts finally culminated in a book by Kate Coleman called, The Secret Wars of Judi Bari: A Car Bomb, The Fight For The Redwoods, and the Death of Earth First!, published on January 25, 2005 by the extreme right wing publisher Encounter Books, owned by ex *Ramparts* co-editor and born-again reactionary Peter Collier.

As it turned out, Coleman's book not only falls short of the mark as far as proving its case, it doesn't even come remotely close to the *target*. It is full of errors in fact as well as unproven rumors, innuendos, and outright falsehoods that are so blatant they have spawned at least one website, www.colemanhoax.info, debunking them page-by-page, line-by-line (that the site was produced by Mike Sweeney himself is immaterial, as the facts he presents—unlike Coleman and her associates—are verified and speak for themselves). Almost nobody has reviewed this book favorably, and most consider it to be little more than a right wing hatchet job intended to discredit Bari and all she stood for, throw doubts on the case against the FBI and Oakland Police, and further discredit the

movement the culminated in Redwood Summer (not to mention line Coleman's and Collier's pockets).¹⁶ The motivation for Coleman and Collier is very easy to discern, and that is greed. It is far more lucrative, in a capitalist economy at least, for one to serve the forces of reaction than it is to challenge them head on. Anderson's motivation is far more personal. In spite of his professed leftist views, Anderson had (among others) a considerable blind spot when it came to matters of gender equality, a point on which he and Bari disagreed vehemently for years until their ultimate falling out in 1993.

Bruce Anderson's own younger brother, Robert Anderson, is among those who have debunked and denounced his Brother's and Coleman's claims, stating:

"(My brother's) approach to the bombing is particularly odd considering that (he) supported Redwood Summer and Judi Bari during that intense political chapter in the history of the Northcoast. It's as if (he) has forgotten what that period was like, how full of political tension, threats and bullying by the timber industry and its supporters."¹⁷

Indeed, Robert Anderson has correctly identified the proverbial "elephant in the room". To know who *did* (and for that matter, who *didn't*) bomb Judi Bari (and Darryl Cherney), it is much more important to determine *why* they bombed Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney. This book does not identify *who* bombed Judi Bari any more than Bari's own book, or even Kate Coleman's, but it *does* explain why. In fact, it picks up the scent of the trail that Bari herself had been following, but whose endpoint she never reached due to her untimely death. When asked, in 1995, why she was bombed, she declared:

"(My) activities came at the intersection of two campaigns: one of the campaigns was timber industry and Wise Use, which both historically are riddled with thugs—(during) the (height of the radical) labor movement—all through the history of timber. I think it goes with all extractive corporations: the worse they do to the

¹⁶ For most of these, see www.colemanhoax.info. It is even more ironic given the fact that Bruce Anderson *himself* once stated, "Mike Sweeney certainly didn't do it...the answer lies somewhere in the timber industry." (in the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, May 29, 1991). **2023 addendum:** this site is no longer active. It is preserved in the "Internet Wayback Machine" at <https://web.archive.org/web/201112051836/http://www.colemanhoax.info:80/>

¹⁷ http://www.andersonfordistrict5.net/documents/judi_bari.html hh 2023 addendum: this site is no longer active. It is preserved in the "Internet Wayback Machine" https://web.archive.org/web/20120112051836/http://www.andersonfordistrict5.net/documents/judi_bari.html

earth, the worse they do to the people, and the timber industry has a very long history of physical brutality to people who would oppose them. I think I was targeted by the timber industry because I was posing somewhat of a threat to them by exposing what was happening here in the redwoods, bringing it into a national forum so people could see it, and I think I was posing a threat to them by building alliances with the workers, by defining the problem as the community vs. these out-of-town corporations, instead of environmentalists versus loggers. I think I posed a threat to them just by restating the question in that manner.”¹⁸

And just what was it that Judi Bari threatened with her political activity? Corporate Timber had, by the time of the bombing, managed to convince a great many people that they managed America’s forests well and that even aged managed forests were healthy forests; that the capitalist business model was ideal for such forestry; that the timber industry provided good jobs; that they treated their workers well; that rural economies in forested regions depended upon the Corporate Timber business model; that where timber unions existed, they had achieved labor peace with the employers; that the industry planted more trees than they cut; that clearcutting was a viable—even *beneficial*—sustainable timber harvesting method; that environmentalists had “gone too far,” and had locked up plenty (if not too many) forests in parks; and that environmentalists were either elitists or “unwashed-out-of-town-jobless-hippies-on-drugs”, who were “outside” agitators with a nefarious, perhaps even “communistic” agenda which would result in the ultimate destruction of rural, timber dominant communities, such as the North Coast.

Bari maintained that *none* of these assertions—not a solitary one—came close to the truth, and that Corporate Timber through its sophisticated propaganda machine and slick P.R., aided dutifully by the Corporate Media, had crafted a paradigm where white was black, or rather—more accurately—yellow was green. Bari maintained that in fact the *opposite* contentions were in fact true and the conventional theories and models put forth by Corporate Timber were but a paper-thin veneer that could be readily exposed and challenged.

Skeptical readers might feel justified in pointing out that Judi Bari was not the first radical environ-

mentalist to expose such official myths, and that is true enough, but there was something significantly different about her approach that made her a far more substantial threat to her adversaries. She fully integrated her radical environmentalism with class struggle at the point of production. There had been many who had opposed the destruction of ancient forests by incorporating direct action tactics and putting their bodies on the line, to the point of risking arrest or even violent repression. There had likewise, been many who had analyzed the destruction of the ancient forests in the context of class and political economy, few—if anyone (outside of Chico Mendes) had done both. Some, like writer Jeff Shantz, have referred to Bari’s approach as “green syndicalism”—which is a more or less accurate description, though she, herself called it “Revolutionary Ecology”. And her perspective wasn’t mere theory; she was actually beginning to put that theory *into practice and it was working*.

Bari believed, and I—dear reader—agree, that she was targeted because she represented a viable democratic, populist, grassroots challenge to the powers that be, in this case, Corporate Timber, and its established paradigm of total control over the redwood forests of California’s North Coast and by extension—as you will see in this book—America’s forests in general, the modern timber industry, and capitalism itself. Bari stood upon the crest of a wave of change that was poised to undermine the existing order, and she was more than willing to ride it to its conclusion. That wave was a confluence of both environmentalist and labor movements and, if left unchecked in its course, it could very well have washed away institutions, both “private” and “public” that were, by many people’s accounts, corrupt and rotten to their very core.

However, as Frederick Douglass once wrote, “power concedes nothing without a struggle,” and this was no exception. Bombing or no, connected or not, the movement which Judi Bari led had *already* faced enormous resistance *and* violence from the established powers and their enablers. In the face of this violence, Bari and her allies remained steadfastly and proudly *nonviolent*, and even *that* resolve challenged the powers that be. When it is understood *why* the bombing occurred, *who* specifically assumes far less significance than the forces which they represented.

Explaining *why* is no simple matter, however, and getting it all down in one place eluded all who

¹⁸ “Who Bombed Judi Bari?”, Judi Bari interviewed by Beth Bosk, *New Settler Interview*, Issue #89, 1995.

have thus tried, including Judi Bari. Recently, Darryl Cherney and his friend Mary Liz Thompson have produced a thorough and excellent documentary, named *Who Bombed Judi Bari?* (a popular title, no doubt), largely based on the video graphed deposition of Judi Bari in preparation for the case against the FBI and Oakland Police. The film also attempts to answer “who” and “why”, and it comes closer than anyone else, but due to the limitations of the medium, cannot tell the whole story, the one that Bari had intended to tell. This book, hopefully, dear reader, tells that tale and provides the answers, but it also requests your patience in doing so. As stated in the quotation by Martin Luther King by which this narrative commences, the arc of history is indeed long, and this story begins, long ago.