

**Committed to the Earth**  
**By TERRY ELLIS**  
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Judi Bari's occupation was variously described. National headlines seven years ago identified her as a dangerous terrorist. Articles written after her death on March 2 called her an environmental activist and leader of Earth First! in the redwood region of Northern California. She was a 47-year-old mother of 11- and 16-year-old daughters, a carpenter by trade and a long-standing member of the Industrial Workers of the World.

But on her official obituary, written as she approached death from inoperable breast cancer, Ms. Bari told friends to simply call her a revolutionary. She wasn't a revolutionary in the sense that could be easily labeled socialist or communist, said friend and neighbor Naomi Wagner. It was a commitment to keep the Earth healthy and productive, the world safe for women and girls and the economy one in which workers reap the benefit of their labor. And it was a commitment to nonviolence, even in the face of violence, said Ms. Wagner.

"Judi came to my watershed, my neighborhood, Sherwood Forest Watershed in 1990," said Ms. Wagner, whose two boys went to school with Ms. Bari's two daughters in the town of Willits, Calif., population 4,000. "I watched her go from somebody who wasn't known to someone who built a movement that transformed the community.... We are mothers. Violent tactics aren't us. We are creative and fun. To Judi's way of thinking, an action had to be fun. If it wasn't fun, it didn't happen."

On May 24, 1990, Judi Bari made national news when she was critically injured by a pipe bomb while driving through Oakland, Calif. FBI agents showed up at the scene of the bombing within minutes, labeling her and fellow Earth First! organizer Darryl Cherney as environmental terrorists and accusing them of carrying the bomb on the back floor of her Subaru station wagon, leading to an accidental explosion. Charges were dropped eight weeks after for lack of evidence but not before the claims had been publicized nationally. Right up until her death, Ms. Bari worked fiercely on a lawsuit against the FBI and Oakland Police Department, charging them with false arrest and civil rights violations. Mr. Cherney and her family and friends will continue the lawsuit.

"Judi stood for, worked for justice," said Betty Ball, a friend and fellow environmentalist with the Mendocino County Environmental Center. "Now it's time for justice for Judi — for finding the bomber and winning her lawsuit." Her death on the one hand leaves a hole in the environmental movement's leadership, Ms. Ball said. On the other hand, those who knew her feel her presence all the time. They remember her courage, her brilliant strategies and her humor, which ranged from the impish to the raunchy.

Ms. Bari's strategy wasn't new. She brought with her years of experience as a peace activist and labor organizer. She also brought to the environmental movement the wisdom that loggers and other sawmill workers aren't the enemy. Instead, she pointed the finger at out-of-town corporate landowners. Even in the face of death threats before the bombing in 1990 and after she was severely injured, Ms. Bari continued to speak out.

"We used to talk about the old Indian saying, 'It's a good day to die,'" said Ms. Wagner. "You have to die for something, not just of something. She was willing to die for her beliefs."

Her view of the world also encompassed death, said 23-year-old Alicia Littletree, who lived with Ms. Bari and her two daughters during the last months of her life and considered Ms. Bari her mentor. "She said to me that her system of belief allows for death, allows for the natural cycles of nature," Ms. Littletree said. When Ms. Littletree asked her if she was

afraid to die, Bari shared an analogy about being pregnant: “At first you’re terrified about this new life, but by the ninth month you’re huge and you can’t wait for the baby to come out. It’s kind of a relief to get it out.”

Ms. Bari asked that her ashes be spread over redwood land that remains unprotected.

“She believed in the natural cycles of the Earth and didn’t add any attributes,” said Ms. Littletree. “She totally respected the Earth and felt it was worth fighting for.”

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