

7.

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW • SPRING 2002

Copyright © 2007. Arissa Media Group, LLC. All rights reserved.

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

### *Burn, Baby, Burn*

#### *The ELF: Terrorists or Defenders of the Planet?*

Guerrilla News Network

Spring 2002

Quick-- name the FBI's number-one domestic terrorist organization.

If you said a cabal of radical Muslims or a posse of white supremacists, you'd be the weakest link. The U.S. government's most-wanted, homegrown terrorist group is the Earth Liberation Front (ELF).

First formed in England from an Earth First! splinter group in the mid-90s, the highly-secretive, non-hierarchical organization has been responsible for a well-orchestrated campaign of arson attacks against businesses and organizations that they claim are destroying the planet.

Basing much of its structure and ethics on those of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the ELF's first official attack in the U.S. was in 1997. Since then, it has caused tens of millions of dollars in damage, notably including the burning of a ski resort in Vail, Colorado (\$28 million); various genetic engineering labs and a Republican Party office in Indiana. Its web site takes credit for more than three dozen acts and even includes a handy primer on "setting fires with electrical timers."

Because of its autonomous cell structure, the ELF has so far been extremely successful in eluding law enforcement. But last summer, Jeff "Free" Luers, a 22-year-old ELF operative (*editorial note; inaccurate*), was convicted of setting fire to a Chevrolet dealership in Eugene, Oregon and attempting to ignite a gasoline tanker nearby. The fire torched three pickup trucks, while the tanker failed to ignite. No one was hurt. Luers was sentenced to 22 years & 8 months. Three days before he was sentenced, as he sat in jail, another ELF cell hit the same dealership, causing ten times the damage - burning 36 SUVs.

To its growing roster of powerful critics, the ELF is a group of terrorists who, like Al Qaeda, pose a threat to America's very "way of life." The loaded rhetoric has only increased since 9/11. Armed with increased powers from the USA/PATRIOT Act and other more recent easings of restrictions on government snooping, law enforcement appears willing to do whatever it takes to take the group down. During a Feb. 12

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW

Congressional hearing, Rep. George Nethercutt (R-WA) stated, “The best way to deal with eco-terrorists is to use the same tactics we’re using in our current war on terrorism.”

The criticism is not just from inside the Beltway; some moderate Greens call the ELF reckless, immature and ultimately harmful to an environmental movement trying to gain mainstream support.

But the ELF doesn’t seem to care what either thinks. Members see themselves as eco-warriors perpetrating “health ops” - the vanguard of a radical fringe willing to put their freedom on the line to save an increasingly threatened environment. Their attacks are meant to send a message, and they hit polluters, clear-cutters, and others they see as enemies of the planet where it hurts the most: in the wallet. They claim to take all necessary precautions to avoid any human or animal casualties. So far none of their arson attacks have hurt anyone.

With all the heat, you might think tracking down the ELF’s new spokesperson, Leslie James Pickering, would be difficult. In fact, the group welcomes getting the word out. So recently, GNN’s info-guerrillas in the misty Northwest, Charles Maol and Roland Glasgow, met up with the bespectacled Pickering at a Portland café and listened as he outlined the group’s ideology of economic sabotage, their blistering critique of moderates, the government’s seeming inability to infiltrate them and the long road ahead.

This month, the UN issued a disturbing new report in which it stated that if current development continues unabated, in the next 30 years the Earth could be littered with a wasteland of urban slums, see the extinction of a quarter of its mammal species and have significant populations dying of thirst and water-borne disease.

Is the ELF our last, best hope for avoiding this horrifying vision? Or is the group just a bunch of aggro-treehuggers armed with outdated ideas and a dangerous propensity to burn things?

You decide . . .

Charles: *What’s your reaction to the FBI and Congress listing the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front as the primary domestic terrorist organizations in the United States?*

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

LJP: The first thing that comes to my mind is the FBI and the system in general are taking the ELF and ALF very seriously because they perceive them as a threat, and in a way that's just what the ALF and ELF want.

I mean, they're attempting to change the system. They're trying to say that we have a completely different value system. We value clean air and clean water, clean soil and the environment more than property and profits and therefore we're the antithesis of the system. For them to say we are a threat is reassuring of our effectiveness as an organization.

At the same time they are basically just targeting industries and corporations in particular. They're not necessarily aimed at the overthrow of the United States government. It's a way for the system to blow the whole thing out of proportion so they can get more funding, more resources, and effectively criminalize the group in the eye of the public... The FBI wants more money to combat this. They want more resources. They want to put anyone who might be an anarchist or a revolutionary or an activist in jail or behind bars or whatever. So it's a big issue.

I personally wish that the ELF/ALF weren't the biggest domestic terrorist threat in the United States. I wish there were an organization that really was targeting the system at large and was being really active in the overthrow of the system because it seems as though we really need to stop and re-evaluate what we're doing and start taking actions that are going to start bringing revolutionary change.

Roland: *How much is public opinion important to the ELF and ALF?*

LJP: I don't know if public opinion is as necessary as getting real and honest and factual information to the public. It's not necessary that the public love the ELF and have ELF t-shirts. It's more important that people understand the motivation and desperation and the tactics that the ELF are engaging in and say, "Well, whether or not I would personally engage in that type of activity, the system is on a suicidal path and we need to do something to stop it immediately and therefore I can at least relate to the ELF on a level."

Roland: *What's the defense to attacks by more mainstream groups who argue the ELF's tactics are creating a backlash to the movement and actually worsens the cause even more?*

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW

LJP: That's another big question. It's based on what I consider is the false assumption that the mainstream movement is actually succeeding on the path that it's engaging in.

We've seen throughout history several examples of successful social justice movements, and every one I've been able to study had an element of radical direct action, economic sabotage and property destruction to it. It can be anything from the Boston Tea Party to stuff that the Black Panthers were doing, and for these mainstream groups to completely come out and condemn the ELF personally shows that they're not part of any revolutionary movement whatsoever. They're happy with their petty crumbs that they're licking off the floor from lobbying and doing national day for animal rights or whatever. They're happy with their minor successes and they are just going to keep going bringing in their non-profit dollars until they retire.

I don't really care what the Sierra Club says. They're monopolizing ideology as to how to effect change and that is essentially why movements aren't successful.

*Charles: Let's talk about tactics for bit. What kinds of tactics are typical in the ELF? What kinds of tactics have been most successful and what tactics have failed miserably?*

LJP: The ALF, throughout the 80s and 90s and up until today, it seemed like they focused on the actual liberation of animals, the freeing of animals which usually consisted of burglary, you know, breaking and entering, freeing animals and finding new homes for them. They also did other kinds of sabotage which didn't entail freeing animals or might have been coupled with the freeing of animals. They destroyed meat trucks for example, or after they freed animals from the vivisection labs they would burn that lab down.

But the ELF is a different story. While it's structured like the ALF and has lots of similarities to the ALF, it's coming from a different background. It comes from-- dare I say-- the Earth First! Background, where there was an element of economic sabotage going on already that was very different. It was sort of unclaimed, quiet, sneak in there in the middle of the night and sabotage a bulldozer, cut down a billboard or spray paint something on a billboard and never take responsibility for it and never try to connect it to

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

the movement. It seems as though that was going on in the 80s and people involved in that thought, “Well, this is a good idea but we’re not taking it far enough.”

It’s said that in 1992 a group broke off of Earth First! in Europe and started the first Earth Liberation Front chapter. Since then, ELF has come to the United States.

The first claimed action was in 1997, and they’ve mainly engaged in arson because it has a major effect in a few ways: It causes massive economic damage to its targets. On average, I think it’s a million dollars per action that the ELF has caused. It’s also very good at getting attention. Now, whether that attention is positive or negative is another issue, but it does draw attention to things like genetic engineering, which basically goes on behind closed doors. The third and most powerful aspect to it is that it is actually, really beginning to be a threat. The system views it as a movement that is very radical in their tactics and is potentially escalating them even further and therefore pays attention to them.

People hear about arson, not just going in with spray paint or freeing some chickens; it’s something that’s very serious and takes a lot of dedication and sincerity to risk your own personal freedom for that kind of thing. And it affects the public consciousness and the political climate in a way that really makes people stop and think, “Wait a minute. Maybe the United States isn’t perfect. There’s a group out there that’s completely the opposite of what they’re trying to perpetrate—the ideas they’re trying to perpetrate in people’s minds—and they’re taking militant direct action against them and they’ve not stopped.”

It’s been going on for over four years now, and that has an effect on the population, not just the liberal activist population but also the mainstream population and the right wing or whatever you want to call the industry-minded, capitalist people. It’s a threat. It’s a sense that maybe I can’t just build this massive genetic engineering compound without getting it torched. So I think it’s effective on a lot of different levels.

Charles: *How does the structure of the ELF/ALF, the anonymity of its members, protect the cells carrying these actions out?*

LJP: First and foremost, the structure of the autonomous, loose-knit, non-hierarchical Earth Liberation Front/ Animal Liberation Front protects

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW

them from capture. There is no leader. There's nobody they can pin down. They have no idea if the person or people that are responsible for Vail are also responsible for Boise Cascade. They have no idea whatsoever. Nobody does, and that's the beauty of it.

But at the same time it goes beyond that, because what they're displaying is a non-hierarchical structure, which is essentially a model of a solution to the sort of oppressive aspects of hierarchy which we are living under in this society. For organizations like the Sierra Club or whoever to just mimic the system's structure while trying to change the system is almost a joke. You know, you have to reevaluate where the problems are coming from in the first place and the ELF has done that. They've created a structure that's completely different. It's the antithesis of the system.

Charles: *Could you speak about the security culture of groups like the ELF?*

LJP: Security culture is a vague term. It can mean anything from knowing what to do if an agent knocks at your door, knowing how to talk or not talk to police officers. In what kind of situation is it okay to engage in certain types of activities and what kind of situation isn't that okay.

The ELF, more specifically, their model of security is that there is no hierarchy. It's basically an ideology. You know if you believe in the values and ideas that are vaguely expressed by the ELF then you can follow their guidelines—their three guidelines. You can follow those guidelines, form your own cell and begin taking action in the name of the Earth Liberation Front.

Therefore, in the case I already used, the people who are responsible for Vail might not know-- and most likely have no idea-- who was responsible for Boise Cascade. And that makes it so the people who get busted for Vail are unable, even if they wanted to, which I'm sure they don't, they are unable to lead the authorities to the people who are responsible for Boise Cascade.

That's a model that I think evolved out of the failures of a lot of groups in the 60s and 70s: The groups that were militant in their tactics but were still based on a hierarchical system which is able to be taken out, the same way government is able to be taken out, the same way corporations are going to be taken out.

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

This is a group where even if all the ELF cells were taken out tomorrow, next week someone could come across the ELF guidelines, form their own cell and start taking action. Or ten years from now, someone could come across it and start taking action. Or twenty years from now, someone could start a group based on the same thing and could be very powerful the way the ELF is very powerful.

Charles: *What are the ELF guidelines?*

LJP: They're essentially to engage in economic sabotage against corporations and government agencies profiting from the destruction of the environment. The second one is to take any necessary precautions to prevent injury to humans or animals. Like, if there was a fish tank in the building or a dog or something like that, they would eliminate the threat of harm to that animal, let alone a security guard or someone sleeping in the building or whatever.

And the third is to express to the public through the media or through whatever source they feel necessary their intent and their reasoning and their logic behind whatever they are doing, to expose the oppression they are fighting against.

As a spokesperson, when a communiqué comes in to the press office I have to evaluate it and make sure I consider it to be an official ELF communiqué—It has to fall into those three guidelines. If there is no communiqué to the action and there is something like ELF spray painted on the scene, it might have been an excellent action, it might have been the best thing that could have been done for that action, but I'm not going to come out and say it was an official ELF action because it didn't follow that last guideline.

Sometimes there might be a good reason to not claim responsibility for something and I think that is necessary in some situations, but as a spokesperson I can't say that is ELF just because there is spray paint.

Roland: *The ELF has been labeled "eco-terrorists" by the media. Does the ELF have a preferred term and what do you think of that label?*

LJP: That label is something I don't even imagine we can ever shed at this point without a complete revolution. The media has grabbed onto that

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW

and they are not letting go until they get taken down. And they do that, again, because they perceive the ELF as a threat and they want to label them and create as negative a stigma around them as they possibly can. I don't believe the ELF is a terrorist organization simply because they don't engage in terror. They engage in economic sabotage.

Those corporations, those government entities, those individuals who are destroying the Earth and oppressing people are doing so because they are making a lot of money at it. That's their motivation. Corporations are in existence specifically to make money. So what the ELF does to counteract that is engage in economic sabotage. They want to eliminate the profit motive.

They have never intended to harm anyone and that's why they never have harmed anyone. If they wanted to conduct a terrorist act they would, because basically they are facing the same charges as a terrorist is if they ever get caught. They are already getting life in prison. If Rep. Nethercutt has anything to do about it, they will be getting the death penalty. If they actually believed that type of activity would be the most effective to engage in, they would be engaging in it. So clearly to me they are a sabotage organization.

They are arsonists. They are vandals. They are criminals. I don't have any qualms about that. I don't want to make them look any less radical than they are, because frankly, the radical aspect of it is what gets them attention and makes them effective. But they aren't terrorists; they just aren't. And if you think about what you are saying when you are calling them eco-terrorists or just terrorists in general, you realize that they are not engaging in terrorism.

Charles: *Who are eco-terrorists?*

LJP: Eco-terrorists are people who are terrorizing the environment, which is basically everyone in the government right now. Basically, everyone in any of the pollution industries. Any capitalist out there right now. Eco-terrorists are the people getting burned by the ELF.

Charles: *Do you think the ELF and ALF can be stopped?*

LJP: No. I think there might be the occasional ELF/ALF cell that slips up, and we have seen a couple examples of that. Specifically with the

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

ALF, there was a group in Salt Lake City that was composed of a bunch of individuals who had personal issues, and that effected the organization. I don't know what specifically happened, but they were involved in subcultures and some other things that were very sort of rumor oriented, and too many people knew about what was going on and people ended up getting busted.

The situation in New York with a series of development homes and there were a bunch of luxury condominiums being developed on like wetlands in Long Island and there were three juveniles prosecuted and convicted for some of those actions and a fourth individual who wasn't a juvenile, was an adult, and is fighting it, claims he didn't have anything to do with it. Essentially one of those individuals was bragging about it-- I think to their friends-- and that is what led to it.

I think that most of the people involved in these activities aren't of that nature. That's just an assumption on my part. I don't think that most people involved in the Earth Liberation Front or Animal Liberation Front are going around bragging about it and that's why they aren't getting caught. I just don't think that the really effective, really serious people involved in the ELF are going to get caught. And that is because the system is created to deal with common criminals, people who are reactionary - someone who gets drunk and goes out and smashes up his girlfriend's car.

In the ELF, action is completely premeditated; not just that, but it's assumed to be rehearsed. They figure out everything they can to avoid security alarms. They figure out everything they can do to avoid leaving fingerprints or traces of hair or footprints at the scene.

There have been over four years of actions here in the United States, over three dozen of them claimed by the ELF, over 40 million dollars in damage and they virtually have no suspects and have captured or prosecuted virtually nobody.

Roland: *Could you speak to the discrepancies in sentencing between common criminals and ecologically-minded economic saboteurs?*

LJP: Say somebody gets drunk or whatever or gets depressed and just randomly burns down a building. That person is facing arson charges and maybe a couple years in jail at the most, depending on how much criminal history they have, or how much damage they caused, or how malicious the

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW

court thinks they are or what have you.

Well, say that a different person does a very similar action of the same economic damage, the same potential risk to individuals or whatever and does that with a political motivation because that corporation is polluting their drinking water for example. That person's facing much more time now because of the legislation that has passed. It's basically discrimination.

If you burn down a building and cause a million dollars worth of damage, a person believing in this democracy would think that you would get the same charge as anyone else who burns down a building and causes a million dollars worth of damage.

*Charles: We talked about the activities of law enforcement being ineffective for the most part; so if what they are doing isn't accomplishing their stated objective, what have their actions accomplished?*

LJP: What they have been doing is basically harassing Craig Rosebraugh and myself and anybody else who might be in public support of the ideology of the group. They have also been profiling anybody who might look like a radical environmentalist, or anybody who might look like an anarchist. On the *60 Minutes* piece that they did on the ELF that Craig Rosebraugh participated in, a representative for the FBI came on and he was saying that their main hope was to infiltrate the group. If they have their heads screwed on straight, they really don't expect to infiltrate an ELF cell, because there is virtually no likelihood of that ever happening.

What they do expect to do is infiltrate the larger anarchist environmental movement. They want to have people in there with dreadlocks and Carhartt pants, and they want to have them go to all of the conferences and try to figure out who is really doing things. The ELF doesn't talk about it, and they are probably not even involved for the most part in the mainstream environmental movement because that would eventually lead to their capture. I think they are people who have nothing to do with the environmental movement and that's because they disagree with it. They don't think it's effective.

As far as my own personal experiences go, they have raided the ELF press office twice since I have been involved with it. They have raided my car. They have taken thousands of dollars of my property that will

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

never be returned. They've taken three or four of my computer systems in particular, and lots of personal items, photographs, what have you. I have had these "chance meetings" with federal agents at the local health food store.

They say, "Oh, how's your health doing," and mention a specific health problem I might have had years ago and just letting me know that they know about that.

It's a sort of psychological harassment. It's like, "Were on to you." They try to make me nervous—try to get me to crack.

The first raid happened when Craig and I left an organization here in town (Portland, OR) that he in particular founded with some other people and I joined shortly afterwards. We left that group and started the press office up and moved our stuff out of that organization and had it in his house in his basement.

His house was raided. The press office was in hiatus between one spot and another and they knew that was a weak point so they raided his house. He was able to give me a call before they kicked the door in, and I came over immediately and before I was able to come into the house, an agent—who had a brain hemorrhage and who is no longer an active agent any more—came storming out at me, and he said "Hey Leslie. How's your leg doing? How's your heart doing?"

Basically letting me know he knew all this stuff, and he wouldn't let me get close to the house. He was one who was really active in the personal harassment side that was going on for a while, and like I said, he isn't with the FBI anymore so that has backed down a bit.

There is another agent specifically from the ATF who for a long time was really up in our face when we started passing on communiqués.

He came up to our house and he was saying, "You guys are walking a fine line. You're on thin ice."

He was trying to make us scared to pass on these communiqués—trying to get us nervous. When we first started getting communiqués we were all living in a house in Portland and it seemed like for a couple months there was a car outside constantly, and it was very nerve racking

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW

psychologically.

But it's not something that's going to deter me or Craig. If anything, it's going to make people fight harder. When you're really being oppressed and it's as blatant as possible, it's really going to make you fight back as hard as you possibly can and that is exactly what happens. There were times we would get really frustrated and Craig and I came out of the house and went up to the car and started yelling, "Get the fuck out of here!" and sometimes they'd leave and sometimes they didn't.

There's two kinds of surveillance and two kinds of harassment. There are the obvious - what you're meant to see and feel the psychological trauma from. And then there is the kind you're intended not to see and not to know about. The type they are heavily engaged in right now is the other kind of surveillance, the second kind, the kind you are not supposed to see or understand or know how it's going. Because they have tried the first kind for years and it hasn't deterred us or deterred the movement in general. So I think they are really heavily engaged in secret surveillance—the tapping of phones--not just ours, but everybody's. Having agent provocateurs or infiltrators at meetings or such types of things.

*Charles: Since 9-11 they have focused more attention on anything they can possibly label terrorism. Have you noticed a marked difference in your life, in your vocation operating the press office?*

LJP: It's definitely different, and as soon as I saw those planes crash into those buildings I knew it was going to be different. And this ties into the other question I answered. When they start coming down on people, it's only going to radicalize people. When they come down on the ELF, calling them terrorists, what that might spawn is-- and I'm not saying this as a personal threat-- but what that might spawn is a more radical, more militant organization. When the oppressor rises so do the forces of the people—the forces of liberation.

While it might have been okay to destroy property but not okay to harm individuals in one person's mind, if you beat that person down a little bit more they might change their mind. I think that's what it's going to do to people with this type of legislation, with this type of talk they have on TV all the time, with all these flags they're convincing people to put in the back of their car windows.

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

Myself, I feel like there's way more pressure. There was already a high risk involved in this position but it seems like it just got a whole lot higher overnight. That doesn't mean it's not worth fighting for, or not worth doing anymore. But it does mean that eventually this position that I'm in, this liberty I have to speak my mind, might be completely eliminated. There might not be, here in the USA with our freedom of speech and our freedom of the press, there might not be that kind of freedom anymore. There already isn't. I'm already facing all kinds of labeling, potential threats and potential imprisonment in this position.

I can foresee the day really soon where anybody that is in this position that I am in would be imprisoned immediately for a "terrorist thought crime" or whatever they want to call it. Specifically, the Feb 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional hearing was the first of its kind. It's something that they never went to the extent of before—conducting a Congressional hearing specifically on eco-terrorism where they subpoenaed anybody.

Roland: *Can you describe how the mainstream media has filtered the message of the ELF/ALF? And what's been your dealing with the press?*

LJP: I think that there is the rebel appeal going on. They want to make us look like villains or rebels. There has always been an appeal in American society to the rebel, James Dean or whatever. People just like somebody who's fighting back or standing up—the underdog. And we were just milking that as much as we could because that's all they're going to give us.

They're not going to put us on *CNN* or *60 Minutes* and say, "Feel free to speak your mind. What's wrong with the environmental situation right now?"

And they're not going to give us twenty minutes of free space. What they do is give us ten seconds of free space after saying "You're a violent eco-terrorist. Defend yourself."

I could go on forever about the mainstream media. It's extremely frustrating.

Charles: *Have there been any occasions that went off and something came back to the press office that it was clear that there was an objective but the action went SNAFU?*

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW

LJP: Offhand, there was at least one communiqué sent where there was an incendiary device that didn't ignite. They claimed credit anyway because they knew it would still get attention. And that was for a Nike distribution center or something, and they had incendiaries on the roof, I believe, and the weather prevented them from igniting.

They sent out a communiqué anyway that said that, "Until Nike stops their sweatshop practices, etc., we're not going to stop fighting against you."

That's the extent of it though. They haven't ever caused as much as a scratch to anyone, so that type of mistake hasn't happened and I don't think it will happen, and I'm worried about it if it does personally, like I said. If the ELF did ever harm anyone all kinds of people would jump on their case.

They would say, "That's the worst thing that could have happened," "It wasn't justified."

During the Vietnam War there was an army-funded Mathematics Research Center in Madison Wisconsin that was bombed by an underground group. They used a massive bomb, almost as big as the Oklahoma City bomb, and one person was accidentally killed from that action. It was a student that had nothing to do with the Mathematics Research Center. But what they were doing was essentially mathematical equations that were going to result in the death of thousands of people in Vietnam. And the repercussions of that bombing were that many in the anti-war, anti-imperialist movement were saying that it was the worst thing that could have happened and that it wasn't justified.

Well, yes that is terrible. I think it's terrible when someone dies. I hate when people are oppressed. That's why I am here doing what I am doing. But what they're fighting against is a system that kills people daily and the intention was not to hurt anybody and that was an accident in that particular case. The intention was to liberate people and it's a completely different picture.

You don't see masses of people in the environmental movement condemning the entire system every time someone dies of cancer, but the system and industry caused that and they are completely responsible for it. You don't see people flipping out every time someone in Afghanistan dies,

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

but they should. It's a flip-flop of values and a flip-flop of what is really significant.

That person who died in that particular Madison bombing, like I said, that's extremely sad and extremely unfortunate, and the people who were responsible for that expressed grievances about it and have been dealing with it for the rest of their lives. The whole movement has suffered because of that. But how many people died in Vietnam? How many kids got sent to Vietnam to fight an unjust war that got slaughtered for nothing?

And I've been speaking on a personal level, and that's not going to gain widespread public support. I wouldn't say that to *CNN* because people would not even let themselves think on that level and try to understand what I am saying. But you have to evaluate the reality of the situation and the levels of oppression that are going on. Because the level of oppression that the system is perpetrating on the people is so massive that anything the Earth Liberation Front could ever do to anybody wouldn't even compare. And the motivations of the system are capitalistic. They're imperialistic.

The motivations of the ELF are liberty, freedom, and justice, and health and fresh air and all the rest. It sickens me to think that an anti-imperialist movement or an environmental movement that is just really coming into its own could get completely stomped out because of one mistake or one thing that wasn't perfect. Revolutions are not perfect. When you are fighting for what you need to survive you are going to make some mistakes along the way. You might hurt somebody. You might burn down some buildings along the way. That's just the way it is because what you have to do to liberate yourself from the oppression that you are under is so intense.

You know when you look to nature you know there's all kinds of violence at a sustainable level. Species eat other species they feed off other life forms and violence exists in nature and that's just the way it is. We can't imagine that there's anything outside of that. That's ridiculous. That's completely anthropocentric. It's based all on the belief that humans are somehow better than everything else in nature and somehow apart from nature and that, I think, is the foundation of oppression in my opinion. It's the foundation of this system. That's what caused Westernized society to rise out of the rest of the human culture. I just think it's ridiculous.

Charles: *What do your folks think of the ELF?*

## GUERRILLA NEWS NETWORK INTERVIEW

LJP: (laughs). I love that question.

Charles: *You get it a lot?*

LJP: Yeah, especially by reporters who are older and view me as young, you know, (imitating an uptight voice) “What do your parents think about this?”

Craig (Rosebraugh) did a piece on 20/20 and they called him a juvenile delinquent; “What do your parents think of this?” (laughs). They were just really mean to him...

I am a product of American society. I grew up rebelling against my parents because they were the most obvious oppressive force in my life and I ran away from home when I was 17 to join an environmental movement. I thought I was never going to talk to my parents again. I dropped out of school and all the rest. Well, since then I’ve realized a lot of things and I’ve rebuilt relationships with my family and it’s difficult because your family, just like rest of the people you deal with in this society, are greatly affected by American propaganda, by the American dream. They’re brainwashed by the system and to get through to them is sometimes the hardest thing you can really do, but you can’t have a revolution without engaging in personal sacrifices and trying to cause a lot of personal changes.

You can’t be a true revolutionary if you’re not challenging yourself and really doing what’s hardest to do and oftentimes, the hardest things to fix are your personal relationships. You know my parents are scared that I might end up in jail. They don’t want to see me in jail, but they have gotten to the point where I really believe they are, how do say, proud of me in a way—proud that I’m standing up for what I believe and that despite the negative stigmatism or bad reputation that I might get and the risks I’m taking in doing this, I’m still fighting for what I believe and speaking the truth and not taking into account the sort of fear factor.

Roland: I imagine that those who share your ideology and those who engage in ELF actions must feel rather isolated. Could you speak to that?

LJP: Yeah, it is really difficult. It’s not something that just anybody can up and do. Let me give you a little history. There’s a group that Craig and I were involved in Portland. It was a social justice group that attempted to

## EARTH LIBERATION FRONT 1997-2002

expose that all the various social issues like feminism, animal rights and environmentalism are all coming from the same root cause—the system’s oppression-- and that was the intention of the organization. But one of things we did was speak out in support of the Animal Liberation Front, which was active at the time. We’d explain to people that we thought they were no different from the Boston Tea Party— that what they were doing was just and should be commended and after doing that a while I think we got a bit of a reputation.

You try to just go to a regular protest and it’s like, “Oh, there’s so and so. Don’t go near them because they’re being heavily surveyed. Don’t associate with them. That person is so high on their horse and that they think they’re so great and what they have to say is so important,” because if somebody sees you on *CNN* they’re going to think, “Oh that person thinks they’re better than me.”

Sometimes that’s the reaction to me being seen on mainstream media. Yeah, it’s completely isolating and I really wish that there was a stronger revolutionary community that would really give myself and Craig and anybody and everybody more support. And wouldn’t be so duped into the sort of jealousy or whatever, because really this, what I do, is extremely stressful, extremely unexciting. After the third or fourth time you’ve had big cameras in your face and you’ve met people you saw on TV, all of the sudden you’re not looking forward to that next interview, especially when they’re calling you a terrorist over and over. I mean, it’s not glamorous. These extreme personal sacrifices you take because you really believe in what you’re doing, and I really believe in what I’m doing, and that’s why I take those sacrifices.