The Believers

Anna's "friends" believed in striking a blow against capitalism and for the environment. Anna believed they were dangerous terrorists. Did she lead them down the primrose path to self-destruction, or did she save us from extremists run amok? Maybe not even Anna knows for sure. By Andrea Todd

Former FBI informant "Anna" returns to the Nimbus Dam, one of the sites, she says, environmental extremists had considered bombing.

It had been a long day at the 2005 CrimethInc Convergence in Bloomington, Indiana, a day of extremes: extreme heat, extreme stress, extreme opinions. Each year since 2002, hundreds of activists—environmental and animal rights radicals, anarcho- and crust-punk bands, tree huggers, vegans, and freegans—descend on urban centers from Athens, Georgia, to Winona, Minnesota, for CrimethInc (a nod to the Orwellian concept of "Thoughtcrime").

The event is a conflagration of protests against all things capitalist and consumerist: record labels, the market economy, corporate influence, working for a living. Food is available in exchange for information (holistic healing, legal advice, propagandist leaflet publishing). No money is allowed; sharing is required. Signs, posted everywhere, announce POLICE NOT WELCOME.

For two years now, a young woman in camo pants, black sweatshirt, military boots, and pink hair, known to both her fellow eco-activists and FBI employers as "Anna," had been crashing the party. At her first CrimethInc (Des Moines 2004), she'd met 26-year-old Eric McDavid, now seated beside her in her compact car. He'd hit her up for a ride to Chicago rather than make the 230-mile journey via the anarchist-favored mode of transport, train-hopping. Both looked forward to the ride for different reasons. McDavid wanted to spend time alone with this woman he'd met a year earlier, who liked to talk about blowing things up; get to know her better. She wanted to get to know him better too. Just not in the same way.

The car stank of body odor and sweat, thanks to the extremists' rejection of regular bathing and hygiene products like antiperspirant (too many brain-withering chemicals). Vicks VapoRub, which Anna routinely dabbed inside her nose, made it barely tolerable. After a few minutes of idle road-trip banter about the conference and flirtations among their fellow activists, Anna, doing as she'd...
been instructed by the FBI, steered the conversation toward a college buddy of McDavid's, Ryan Lewis.

Lewis was an environmental extremist—at that time sitting in the Sacramento County Jail, awaiting his trial on charges of conspiracy to commit arson. Lewis had allegedly planted bombs in office buildings and housing development sites, credited ELF—the Earth Liberation Front, a loose network of radical environmentalists—with his work.

“So, did you help him?” Anna asked. He said no, he hadn’t.

“I don’t believe you—you’re pretty militant,” she sassed back.

“I have my own plans,” McDavid responded, and talked a bit about the bomb recipe he’d scored at Mountain Justice. He asked Anna, whom he knew as a medic in the movement, if she blew his hand off building a bomb, would she take care of him?

“I’d have to think about it.”

After a tense silence, McDavid told Anna that if he ever found out she was a cop, he’d kill her.

Anna had a split second to react and get it right. Did he know? Did he suspect? Was it all over?

“Fuck you!” she shouted back, keeping her eyes on the road, feeling her face flush. “You think that about me after all this time? Fuck you! If I find out you’re a cop, I’ll kill you!”

McDavid smiled and settled back in his seat. “Good,” he said.

This is Anna’s version of the story (McDavid denies this conversation ever took place), and like so many of her spy tales, it unfolds with cinematic flourish, showcasing her rapid thinking under pressure. Arranging to meet her has been no easy task. She will not tell me where she lives; she will come to me, insisting on a public spot in Folsom, California, near Sacramento. As I drive into the lot in front of an area coffee shop, my cell phone rings. “I think you just pulled in,” she says. Then, “It’s Anna.”

I check my rearview mirror. “Where are you?” I ask, but the line’s dead. I snap the phone closed, check again, and there she is. These days, she’s a brunette. In jeans, a blazer, and makeup, she looks older than I expected (she won’t confirm her age, but according to newspaper reports, she’d be about 22 now); still, she has the skin of an adolescent and the creamy, pudgy hands of a child. When she drops her keys and bends to retrieve them, you can spot a colorful tattoo on her back.

Before acquiescing to a face-to-face, she had laid down some ground rules in our e-mail exchanges (which, though her tone is wary and businesslike, are also punctuated with the occasional emoticon): no talk about where she’s from, her family, what she studied in college, what she’s doing now. As we get to know each other better, as we will over the course of several days, driving her rental car to revisit the sites her cell targeted for bombing, and over wine she orders as expertly as a sommelier, she opens up, then just as quickly changes her mind about what details I can print. She makes many snap judgments: “I heard you went to Berkeley and was like, Oh, no, a hippie.” But when she learns that I come from a line of cops and firefighters, she’s comfortable with that.

The second time we meet—same place—Anna apologizes for not greeting me right away. She said she thought she’d spotted my car, pointing to another white Honda Civic. “But it wasn’t your license plate.” She also apologizes for being so paranoid, detailing the threats against her life, via phone, e-mail, and in posts on ELF message boards. “I’ve just started rebuilding some of the personal relationships I had to let go,” she says, including a boyfriend. She had no way to explain to her parents the money she was getting from the FBI—“They thought I was dealing drugs.”

Later, the FBI told her that her work was “nothing short of heroic,” that they’d placed undercover agents in eco-terrorist cells before, but they had all been found out. Even her bitter enemies admit her sleuthing has rocked the environmental extremist movement.

Some critics dismissed her as “an easily bribed student,” but truthfully, money had nothing to do with it. Anna says she grew up “happy” in an upper-middle-class family, the middle child and only girl, who, like the stereotype, yearned for attention. Her father was an educator, her mother a homemaker; both were once what Anna describes as unaffectionately as “former Vietnam-era protest hippies. But that was 35 years ago,” she quickly points out. “I wasn’t rebelling by adopting moderate conservative views.”

As a 15-year-old, Anna says she was so enraged by 9/11 that just days afterward, she e-mailed a site called Militarywomen.org expressing her desire to join the Army and study counterintelligence. “My friends and I saw that plane fly into the World Trade Center, and we thought right away that it was [some Palestinian]

me where she lives; she will come to me, insisting on a public spot in Folsom, California, near Sacramento. As I drive into the lot in front of an area coffee shop, my cell phone rings. “I think you just pulled in,” she says. Then, “It’s Anna.”

I check my rearview mirror. “Where are you?” I ask, but the line’s dead. I snap the phone closed, check again, and there she is. These days, she’s a brunette. In jeans, a blazer, and makeup, she looks older than I expected (she won’t confirm her age, but according to newspaper reports, she’d be about 22 now); still, she has the skin of an adolescent and the creamy, pudgy hands of a child. When she drops her keys and bends to retrieve them, you can spot a colorful tattoo on her back.

Before acquiescing to a face-to-face, she had laid down some ground rules in our e-mail exchanges (which, though her tone is wary and businesslike, are also punctuated with the occasional emoticon): no talk about where she’s from, her family, what she studied in college, what she’s doing now. As we get to know each other better, as we will over the course of several days, driving her rental car to revisit the sites her cell targeted for bombing, and over wine she orders as expertly as a sommelier, she opens up, then just as quickly changes her mind about what details I can print. She makes many snap judgments: “I heard you went to Berkeley and was like, Oh, no, a hippie.” But when she learns that I come from a line of cops and firefighters, she’s comfortable with that.

The second time we meet—same place—Anna apologizes for not greeting me right away. She said she thought she’d spotted my car, pointing to another white Honda Civic. “But it wasn’t your license plate.” She also apologizes for being so paranoid, detailing the threats against her life, via phone, e-mail, and in posts on ELF message boards. “I’ve just started rebuilding some of the personal relationships I had to let go,” she says, including a boyfriend. She had no way to explain to her parents the money she was getting from the FBI—“They thought I was dealing drugs.”

Later, the FBI told her that her work was “nothing short of heroic,” that they’d placed undercover agents in eco-terrorist cells before, but they had all been found out. Even her bitter enemies admit her sleuthing has rocked the environmental extremist movement.

Some critics dismissed her as “an easily bribed student,” but truthfully, money had nothing to do with it. Anna says she grew up “happy” in an upper-middle-class family, the middle child and only girl, who, like the stereotype, yearned for attention. Her father was an educator, her mother a homemaker; both were once what Anna describes as unaffectionately as “former Vietnam-era protest hippies. But that was 35 years ago,” she quickly points out. “I wasn’t rebelling by adopting moderate conservative views.”

As a 15-year-old, Anna says she was so enraged by 9/11 that just days afterward, she e-mailed a site called Militarywomen.org expressing her desire to join the Army and study counterintelligence. “My friends and I saw that plane fly into the World Trade Center, and we thought right away that it was [some Palestinian]
If the cellmates succeeded in their plans to implode the Nimbus Dam, U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott claimed, it would have made what happened in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina look like a Sunday pancake breakfast.

Anna met with two Miami police officers who wanted to send her to the Convergence, an epicenter of activist planning where protestors get information, instructions, supplies. “Law enforcement is easy to spot in these groups,” Anna says. “Cops put the clothes on, but they walk a certain way, they stand a certain way”—it’s the reason for the agency’s failure to penetrate the movement, she claims. “They remained adversarial. I had more of a researcher’s viewpoint.”

Anna’s first assignment would be to attend the G8, or Group of Eight summit, near Atlanta later that summer. An international forum for the governments of the eight nations who represent 65 percent of the world economy and the majority of military expenditure, G8 summits are extremist hot spots. The Miami agents also wanted to book her for both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, in Boston and New York, respectively, later in the summer. For any investigation of these groups to be legitimate—to get around the “freedom of assembly” right U.S. citizens are afforded—law enforcement needs to have proof of illegal activity. Anna’s FTAA report gave them the green light. “This was Christmas come early for them,” Anna says with a laugh.

Although ELF and its furry-friendly cousin, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), are intent on destroying government and corporate property without any loss of life—in the roughly 15 years they’ve been organizing, there has been an estimated $100 million in damage without a single fatality—the Bush administration likens these groups to Al-Qaeda, and considers them “one of the FBI’s highest domestic priorities,” as FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III has said. Under Bush, since 9/11, the number of members in the Bureau’s Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) has more than quadrupled. The Feds’ efforts have resulted in several high-profile busts, including “Operation Backfire”—the government’s decade-long investigation and subsequent indictment in 2006 of 11 of the country’s most notorious environmental activists, known as “The Family,” credited for much of the big-damage, “direct-action” eco-terrorism, including the $12 million torching of a ski resort in Vail. Meanwhile, ELF activists claimed responsibility for the costliest act of eco-extremism on U.S. soil, the $50 million incineration of an apartment complex under construction in San Diego. Eco-extremists believe that developments like these degrade the surrounding natural environments. “We must all act our consciousness and inflict economic harm upon all of those who are
If the cellmates succeeded in their plans to implose the Nimbus Dam, U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott claimed, it would have made "what happened in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina look like a Sunday pancake breakfast." 

Anna met with two Miami police officers who wanted to send her to the Convergence, an epicenter of activist planning where protesters get information, instructions, supplies. "Law enforcement is easy to spot in these groups," Anna says. "Cops put the clothes on, but they walk a certain way, they stand a certain way"—it's the reason for the agency's failure to penetrate the movement, she claims. "They remained adversarial. I had more of a researcher's viewpoint."

Anna's first assignment would be to attend the G8, or Group of Eight summit, near Atlanta later that summer. An international forum for the governments of the eight nations who represent 65 percent of the world economy and the majority of military expenditure, G8 summits are extremist hot spots. The Miami agents also wanted to book her for both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, in Boston and New York, respectively, later in the summer. For any investigation of these groups to be legitimate—to get around the "freedom of assembly" right U.S. citizens are afforded—law enforcement needs to have proof of illegal activity. Anna's FTAA report gave them the green light. "This was Christmas come early for them," Anna says with a laugh.

Although ELF and its furry-friendly cousin, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), are intent on destroying government and corporate property without any loss of life—in the roughly 15 years they've been organizing, there has been an estimated $100 million in damage without a single fatality—the Bush administration likens these groups to Al-Qaeda, and considers them "one of the FBI's highest domestic priorities," as FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III has said. Under Bush, since 9/11, the number of members in the Bureau's Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) has more than quadrupled. The Feds' efforts have resulted in several high-profile busts, including "Operation Backfire"—the government's decade-long investigation and subsequent indictment in 2006 of 11 of the country's most notorious environmental activists, known as "The Family," credited for much of the big-damage, "direct-action" eco-terrorism, including the $12 million torching of a ski resort in Vail. Meanwhile, ELF activists claimed responsibility for the costliest act of eco-terrorism on U.S. soil, the $50 million incineration of an apartment complex under construction in San Diego. Eco-extremists believe that developments like these decimate the surrounding natural environments. "We must all act our consciousness and inflict economic harm upon all of those who are..."
responsible for the destruction of the earth and its inhabitants. We encourage others to find a local Earth raping and make them pay for the damages they are inflicting,” reads a typical statement from one-time ELF spokesperson Craig Rosebraugh.

Environmentalists refer to the government’s ongoing sweep of these radical groups, many of which have no “list” membership but are composed of a loosely network of anarchists and activists, as the “Green Scare,” an overt reference to the Red Scare of the McCarthy Era. The stage for the investigation had been set by the broad reach of Bush’s Patriot Act and the fact that after 9/11, then-Attorney General John Ashcroft upped the guidelines for counterintelligence gathering—approving aggressive investigative tactics previously reserved for CIA operations. “The government has it in for a group of individuals they sloppily lump together as anarchists, radicals, ELF and ALF environmentalists—the collective boogeyman,” says Ben Rosenfeld, a civil rights attorney in California’s Bay Area. “Now they have a slew of new resources and laws to target people for their ideology.”

The FBI insists that, because these cells are tightly knit and transient, intensive undercover work, secret surveillance, and aggressive pressure of those arrested and charged with crimes to cooperate, is the only effective way to stop the attacks before they are carried out. Civil liberties groups naturally oppose such tactics in the name of terror-watch. “Calling individuals associated with any of these groups the ‘No. 1 threat to security’ is really hyperbolic,” Rosenfeld says, FBI Deputy Assistant Director John Lewis did in 2005. Since 1990, more than 1,800 criminal acts in the U.S. have been attributed to ELF, ALF, and similar groups, says FBI spokesperson Bill Carter (but they include everything from vandalism and arson to threatening letters and phone calls). “Basically, the FBI no longer concentrates on crime solving, but has moved to crime prevention”—which creates some serious constitutional issues, namely that innocent-until-proven-guilty cornerstone of our legal system.

Yet, nonviolent environmental groups such as Greenpeace, Earthjustice (“The Earth’s lawyers”), and even Earth First!, the original eco-terrorist organization, are quick to distance themselves from these extremist factions. Most contend that eco-terrorists have the same negative effect on the green movement as Muslim terrorists have on the Islamic faith: guilt by association.

“To believe that these people aren’t capable of harm or serious attack is not giving them enough credit,” Anna says, as we speed along California’s Highway 80 in her rental car to the cabin in Dutch Flat, the wooded spot where the group attempted its first homemade bomb. “These people believe in this movement on a very deep and spiritual level…. The earth is feeling the pain of the dying birds and trees, and she is sending out a call to arms, a spiritual and religious call to arms.”

But there’s no mistaking the typical anarchist/eco-activist gathering for an Al-Qaeda training camp; a three-ring circus is more like it. G8 was no exception, and activists were cooking up big plans. “These people look back to the World Trade Organization riots in 1999 as their big moment: We had the revolution for a little bit,” Anna says, referring to the five days during which 50,000 protesters swarmed Seattle, rioting and looting, resulting in 600 arrests. “G8 was supposed to be WTO II.” Anna put school on hold in order to throw herself into the planning meetings for G8 and the political conventions—“I thought it would be temporary, like a summer break, and then I’d be right back in school.” In the meantime, she had been perfecting her undercover role. Choosing the identity of a medic—one offering the most passivity within the movement—Anna would offer aid or assistance to protesters suffering from hypothermia or heat exhaustion and carry supplies of holistic medicine: lavender bandages, homemade splints, natural oils and herbs. Her uniform consisted of the camo penta, boots, sweatshirt, red armband, and Palestinian kaffiyeh scarf that help members blend in during protests. An “initiation tattoo”—a skull and black flag on her shoulder—is part of her undercover work as well; she intends to have it removed as soon as she can save the three grand it costs to do so.

Despite organizers’ aspirations, only about 50 protesters showed up at G8—though it wasn’t a complete loss. As a “confidential source,” Anna was providing the agency with names, reports on any illegal activity, and observations about the inner workings of the movement. And it was there that Anna met a quiet young protestor called Ollie—“as in Ollie Oxen,” Anna says, the phrase used in children’s hide-and-seek games and the name of his pro-eco, anarchist website (most serious activists use handles). “Ollie” was actually Zachary Jenson, who lived in Tennessee and was so poor that he qualified for—and helped feed his comrades with—food stamps. Via Jenson and others, Anna scored an invite to the CrimeThInc Convergence in Des Moines, where law enforcement had most wanted to place her. “You are invited to attend these things when you serve a role, are considered trustworthy and important,” she says.

In August 2004, Anna phoned Jenson from a Des Moines truck stop to say that she’d just hitchhiked up from Florida, and could someone come and get her? Jenson, accompanied by four friends, piled into a car to pick her up. One of those friends was McDavids.

**Eric McDavid grew up in Orangevale, California, a middle-class suburb near Sacramento. Six feet tall and 200 pounds, the affable redhead played football for Casa Robles High School and worked as a carpenter for a bit while studying philosophy and conflict resolution at Sierra College. His parents—mother, a marriage and family therapist; father, a computer engineer—both from midwestern farming families, raised their children with a respect for the land. McDavids had been involved with the peace movement since the beginning of the Iraq war; when his parents gave him **Dude, Where’s My Country? **Michael Moore’s anti-Bush policy polemic, it changed his life forever.**

Today, seated on the other side of a glass pod in the Sacramento County Jail, McDavid has dropped more than 50 pounds from hunger-striking for vegan food, as a result of which he has also
developed a heart condition. His collarbone juts from his orange jumpsuit. His head is shaved but his goatee is strawberry blond, giving him an incongruously jolly look. He reaches under the slot at the bottom of the glass and his handshake is light and quick. He sits down and smiles. Smiles even when I mention Anna's name.

McDavid reluctantly recalls details of their first meeting. “She had bright pink hair and wore a camouflage skirt,” McDavid says. “I was scared of her. She had this strong, feminine energy. Very independent, which I thought to be very cool.” The hitchhiking story, he admits, was part of the allure at first. “Now I know, hell no, she didn’t hitchhike. I know now the FBI dropped her off.” (When I ask Anna about this later, she just laughs.)

“So she arrives and starts throwing her stuff around,” McDavid continues, noting that she wasn’t exactly spouting activist rhetoric. “She was very subtle about everything.”

Almost everything: “I’m out smoking a cigarette and she comes and stands next to me and says, ‘So when are you gonna let me go to bed?’” McDavid recalls, grinning at the supposed implication. “I look at Jenson, he looks at me, and we’re like, Huh. Okay. So she’s like that.” The two ended up sleeping next to each other, but nothing happened. (“I think our feet touched,” Anna recalls emphatically.)

Anna describes her first impression of McDavid as “this chubby kid who played football,” “warm to everyone at the gathering,” and “a real gentleman.” She was aware of her effect on him, though conventional modes of flirtation weren’t going to win any points with the opposite sex. “One of the best things about this movement is the way women are treated and viewed,” Anna says. “They reject typical standards of beauty, that you have to be stick-thin, with Pantene hair, perfect skin. I was often told if I didn’t look so mainstream I’d be more attractive. They focus on a woman’s independence, her passion, her conviction. And she is treated as an equal.” Furthermore, Anna had fashioned herself into a “straight-edge sexual.” “I met a woman early on who had this persona, and I sort of adopted it for myself,” she says. “The idea being, my body is a temple. No drugs, no chemicals, nothing will come into my body, not even a penis.” Anna thinks it was partly her off-limits identity that continued to fuel McDavid’s interest.

And, no doubt, her ability to play the impassioned, balls-out protestor. When the four regrouped later that month on the steps of the New York Public Library for the RNC demonstrations—where AIDS activists protested nuke, mothers of soldiers killed in Iraq carried signs that read BUSH KILLED MY SON, and eco-activists arrived with their giant Earth float and Krazy Glue to gum up department store doors—Anna headed for the eye of the storm, even as her comrades hung back. “Anna gets hyped up about moving to the upper platform and tries to recruit the rest of us to do the same,” McDavid says. “About five go up, and the cops converge on the whole group.” Handcuffed, she was led off to a van parked on the street. “I’m concerned. I’m wondering. Why they hell are they grabbing her?” he says. She never emerged from the van.

Jenson was also bothered by the arrest. “We talked later about how she just—poof!—disappeared. Held for two days, then released without incident,” she said. (Meanwhile, Anna was actually sitting in a New York coffee shop being debriefed by the Miami FBI.)

The months following President Bush’s reelection in November 2004 ushered in a time of heightened eco-terrorist activity. A series of crude explosive devices was discovered in upscale subdivisions and an apartment complex, all in Northwestern California. Graffiti sprayed nearby declared WE WILL WIN—ELF, and letters sent to area papers said more actions were planned. Law enforcement ratcheted up their vigilance, and McDavid dropped out of sight just as investigators arrested his college friend Ryan Lewis on charges of arson. Two weeks later, FBI agents showed up on the McDavid family’s doorstep.

The McDavids were puzzled about the inquest, describing their son as a peacemaker and an animal lover who settled squabbles between his two younger sisters, who would scare them with spiders and then transport the spiders, by hand, back to the garden. “He wouldn’t let any of us kill spiders,” Eileen McDavid says. An open-minded mother, she saw the whole “traveling period” as part of her son’s journey to find himself. At one point, Erc had expressed that he was in love with two women (he’d been dating someone from outside the movement) and was trying to decide between them. “He was at that age, so yes, I thought, maybe this is it, maybe he’s serious,” she shrugs. It saddens her now to realize that one of these women was Anna.

Anna finally laid eyes again on McDavid that summer at the apartment of a friend of Jenson’s named Lauren Weiner, “Wren.” Brought up in the affluent New York City suburb of Pound Ridge, Weiner was active in the eco-movement while studying at the Philadelphia College of Art. McDavid was “barely recognizable,” Anna recalls. “He looked like a Viking. He was lean, buff, like he’d been working out. He had all these piercings and was suddenly so radicalized.” At one point, out on Weiner’s balcony, McDavid approached Anna: “I want to talk to you in private,” he said. McDavid confessed his feelings for her. “He said he thought we were soul twins, we needed to be together. He put his arm around me.”

In a later recorded conversation about that night (after Anna’s status had been upgraded to wear a wire), she reveals to Weiner that she called out McDavid on how much he’d changed and asked about his influences. “Well, you, for one,” he allegedly responded. How much of McDavid’s hard-core transformation was an attempt to please Anna, and how much of it was self-directed, would become a pivotal question later on.

Anna and McDavid were together that August at the Bloomington CrimethInc Convergence, at which about 300 people participated in workshops on subjects such as how to maintain a vegan lifestyle, be a political prisoner, or break out of handcuffs (“Master keys for handcuffs,” says Anna, adding, “Information from that workshop went out to everyone in the FBI.”). At the conference’s close, McDavid eagerly hopped that ride with Anna to Chicago, during which Anna says he talked about Lewis, confirming FBI suspicions about his association and leading the agency to tag him as a person of interest.

(Continued on page 323)
they thought I was weak. They kept saying, "He keeps coming at you," assuming that I would eventually fold, that I didn't have the balls or the fortitude to resist. They were my target; I was not an agent or over, it's not gonna happen."

When a relationship between informants and subject crosses a line into intimacy, it often leads to small deceptions, jeopardizing the necessary transparency with law enforcement. While Anna was able to deftly manipulate the agents, she admits that she and Weaver became something "like sisters" over the seven weeks she spent in Philly. "It made the job a lot harder. She invited me to an art show of hers. She didn't invite anyone in her family, just me, and I was also an undercover agent but as a friend." On tape, Anna actually asks Weaver if she's "getting cold feet." And "I was sincerely hoping that she would just pull out of it, stay with her family and move back to New York. But she was determined to go." Anna says.

The cell spent Thanksgiving at McDaid's home while his parents were away, discussing their various roles. Weaver was responsible for tactical materials: the equipment, such as a lot of duct tape, stuff for chemistry lab, and bomb-making books, including "The Black Bomber's Handbook," which she bought with her mother's credit card. Jenson's job was to engage in "shadowlike ninja tactics," Anna recalls, laughing. "That was his role, to teach us all how to be ninjas." Anna, the media, went to get medical supplies, easily purchased at Whole Foods.

She was also asked to track down bomb recipe, "I go to the FBI with this, and they said, 'Well, of course we're not going to give you bomb recipes that actually work, so they gave me a dozen recipes I was missing something—something that would smoke and flash.'" One of the recipes was similar to Timothy McVeigh's, an ammonium nitrate bomb, minus the fertilizer.

Anna searched for a place where they could work and found a two-bedroom cabin in wooded Dutch Flat. The FBI paid the rent on the place for the month of January, which she explained away as money she earned strip- striping in college. Collecting the collective is one place presented to her as one of the challenges. After various delays, Anna agreed to drive Weaver and Jensen across-country. The FBI gave her a government-issue '96 Chery Lumina wired with high-tech gizmo imaginable (she claimed that her own car had broken down). "They could track me anywhere. They could spot me in a helicopter. That's how seriously the government took this case," Anna says.

Through blizzards and over icy roads, the three drove 20 hours a day. Anna did most of the driving, anxious about allowing Jensen and Weaver to operate the tricked-out vehicle, with the recording switch on the driver's side door. During the ride, Jensen and Weaver discussed the plans and targets, all of it taped. "They talked about blowing up cell phone towers and a Wal-Mart," Anna insists—conversations that could contradict the information that she and McDaid were running the show.

The group arrived in Dutch Flat and moved into a cabin wired and ready for surveillance. Cameras and recorders were planted in the home's public spaces—the rooms where Anna slept out on the couch, in the living area, while the other rotated bedrooms. The FBI set up camp in a trailer a ways down the dirt road, near a volunteer fire station. The cabin was hidden complete- ly behind the nightly spruces and redwoods. "I had five minutes to save my own life," Anna says, as we walk around the area, thick with dry pine needles that could all too easily catch fire. And there was snow. The driveway was tricky that time of year.

One afternoon, Weaver called Anna back to one of the bedrooms. "Anna," she said, happily, "I have something for you..." Anna strolled back to find the two of them grinning. Weaver held a spider the size of her hand. "Look!" Weaver squealed, shoving it in Anna's face. Deathly afraid of spiders ("And they knew it, too"), Anna let out a scream. The agents could hear it but couldn't see what was happening.

Torres described the scene from outside the SUV. He pulled out his gun. "He hears this scream, and he thinks I'm being murdered. He thinks my head is rolling on the floor," Anna says. Without missing a beat, she ran out to the front room, where the cameras would show she was safe, and yelled, "That's the biggest freakin' spider!"

It stopped, Torres, SUV lights flashing, just in time. Anna admits it was good to know her handlers were on their toes, but had their command station been any closer, the investigation would have over.

Despite the fact that the group had thus far been short on motivation—Anna admitting on tape that Jensen and Weaver had a tendency to "dillydally" and that the drug of choice among the group was marijuana—the team now "moved fast," Anna says.

Cell phone towers made ideal terror targets because, as noted eco-activist Derrick Jensen, one of McDaid's admitted influences, stated in a well-distributed interview, "You can't make moral arguments by leaving a cell tower up. You aren't going to kill people by taking this tower down. After your hand, cell towers kill between five and 50 million migratory songbirds every year." McDaid, Anna says, had also talked up targeting what he called the "Tree Factory," or the Institute of Forest Genetics (IFG), responsible for the genetic development of disease-resistant trees. Allowing the government to make trees could put nature's "real" trees in danger given their contribution to capitalist growth—and the risk that these alien trees might overtake the native stock.

The group also scouted the North Dam, which holds back Lake Natoma, a 7,000-acre watershed. Gazing up at the 87-foot-tall, 1,093-foot-wide wall of concrete, the group agreed that, if Nimbus were ever a possibility, they'd have to test one of their bombs on concrete first. A lot of it. The dam might have made a good ELF target—because blowing up its gates would actually not result in much death or destruction to the city 24 miles below. Jeff McCracken, a spokesperson for the dam, confirms that the water would just "trick" down the American and Sacramento rivers, though U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott would later claim, with much bravado, that thousands of lives had been saved by the FBI's investigation, and that if the cell-mates had succeeded in their plans to implode Nimbus it would have made "what happened in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina look like a Sunday pancake breakfast."
books—variations on salt and bleach, petroleum jelly and powdered sugar, plumber’s putty, battery acid, and the trick candles that don’t blow out. The standard bomb: a milk jug filled with a gas-soaked rag. Throw in a cigarette until it burns down and catches. Boom! “These are the things you fall back on when the secker bombs don’t work,” Anna says.

The group broke over targets and whether to credit ELF with the attack (doing so can carry a higher penalty). The cell members also butted heads over what Anna says McDavid called “collateral damage”—those who die as a result of just being there, in the wrong place at the wrong time. Wein and Jensen didn’t want to risk any fatalities, despite Anna’s vocal frustration with their reluctance, the tapes show. McDavid remained silent throughout, until asked his opinion: “Well, if it happens, it happens. It’s collateral damage.”

A couple of unsettling incidents put already frazzled nerves on edge. On January 11, Anna was pulled over by a California highway patrol officer after rolling through a stop sign on the way to the cabin. “The whole cell was pissed at me,” she says. “How could you be so stupid, getting pulled over so close to where we are?” they fumed. “The cops will be able to tie us to shit that goes down.” The next day, while McDavid was riding shotgun inAnna’s car, a recording device tumbled out from under the glove compartment. McDavid picked it up. With typical alacrity, Anna muttered something about the car being a piece of junk, and told him to stuff it back in the glove compartment, which McDavid did. Complicating things, Anna says that during this time, McDavid’s interest in her, once seemingly damped, had picked up.

The infighting culminated in a huge argument the group had that night when a bomb-making experiment fizzled. The tapes clearly present a group on edge. As Anna and Wein were shout over each other, McDavid tried to mediate the situation, Jensen says next to nothing.

M: Take it down a few notches and relax and chill out and maybe come back and chill out later; that’s totally okay.

W: You know, we can all just chill out for the night, like, you know, stress levels have gone up and fucking down, we’ve all been tested today and everyone, I know every single one of our heart rates have been, like, jacked today. Maybe we could all just breathe. I can make pasta.

A: Tomorrow, what were we planning on doing tomorrow? Are we still planning on doing anything tomorrow? Or should I just stop talking about plans?

M: Hmmmm.

W: I would love it if you guys followed a plan.

A: How about that?

When asked about that night, McDavid describes Anna’s “meltdown”: “She basically had a tiny fit when the mixture didn’t set, kicking at pebbles, yelling, ‘Fuck! I’m so fucking fuck! A: I would love it if you guys followed a plan.

As news of the arrest spread, ELF and ALF groups rallied to support the cause of all three, running pictures of Anna on their websites and outing her as an informant. But Wein quickly turned. In exchange for testimony, McDavid says, “I offered to be the go-to person in charge of general conspiracy.” Six months later, Jensen made the same deal with prosecutors. After they flipped, they were pilloried as snitches—worse than informants, if that’s possible—and green groups withdrew their support.

McDavid, meanwhile, spent a year and a half in a 7-by-11-foot cell in solitary confinement awaiting trial. Charges of conspiracy to commit arson against government property. He is surprisingly chipper, given his long isolation, like only those who are sustained by a belief in their moral rectitude can be. He says he never threatened to kill Anna—I would never hurt anyone—and denies the knife-wielding incident, as it’s come to be called, ever happened. He has asked to take a polygraph, though the results are inadmissible in court. “Anything. You can inject me with that truth serum; that never happened.” (The FBI was unable to provide video of the event nor could they find the “hunting knife.”)

A sticking point with the jury was McDavid’s seeming indifference to related fatalities: “When I was discussing ‘collateral damage’ with the ELF group, that was a philosophic discussion,” says McDavid, arguing that he was making the same case for unintentional loss of life in the war for the environment as President Bush has, many times, for the unintentional loss of life in Iraq.

McDavid’s attorney, Mark Reischel, who has defended environmental activists before, fought the conspiracy charges based on the term’s legal definition (conspiracy must involve at least two individuals, neither of them government agents). He also tried to prove his client was “entrapped”—in effect, goaded and given logistical support by the government, not “predatory.” Out of the bombings, Anna was violating the law left and right, maintains Reischel. Guidelines for undercover work are clear: Agents cannot lead, push, coax, or manufacture. “She admitted [she knew] that on the stand,” Reischel says. “What about the part on the tape where she says, ‘We need to stick to a fucking plan!’ What about that?” But, he adds, it’s not her fault. “She didn’t know what she was doing. This girl, Anna or whatever, she just wanted to do a good job. I was the FBI’s responsibility, when they put her to work, to make sure she knew what she was doing. Or, if not, assume the risk when you put someone that novice in such a legally complex situation.”

Under cross-examination by Reischel, Torres admitted he hadn’t read all of the literature on informants; nor could he recall any specific concerns about the Attorney General’s guidelines regarding political protests. (The prosecutorial team insists that Torres read a condensed version of the document—and besides, they’re only guidelines, not laws.)

“If this case teaches one lesson,” Reischel says, “it’s that the point where the government can say whatever the fuck they want. Do whatever the fuck they want. Whatever the fuck they want.”

Still, the jury voted to convict on September 27, 2007, and at press time the three defendants are still awaiting sentencing. Reischel believes the prosecution will ask for the maximum in both cases: 20 years for McDavid, five for Jensen and Wein. Anna says that Jensen is currently delivering pizza in Washington State and Wein is living at home with her mother in New York. Jensen’s lawyer did not return calls, but Wein’s attorney (and cousin), Jeff Wein, expressed reluctance to comment on the case. “She’s scared to death of going to prison,” he says. “I’ve never seen her do something she shouldn’t have, she accepts responsibility for her actions, and she knows what she did is wrong.” Still, he continues, there are very troubling issues in the case. “This is as extreme a case of pushing as I’ve ever seen. This girl, Anna—Lauren was completely enamored of her. She was like the sister she never had. This is a very disturbing case.”

McDavid is optimistic about his appeal. “I
Four months after the guilty verdict, juror Diane Bennett was happy to hear from me, she says, “because she was bothered by this entire thing since that day.” Bennett was so upset by the judgment that she marched right out to local camera crews. “I said the FBI was an embarrassment,” she says, as other jurors scrambled to unload similar opinions. “I hope he gets a new trial. I’m not happy with the one he got.”

Bennett and most of the other jurors struggled with the entrapment issue but said the judge’s instructions were confusing. Bennett says it was clear from the start that acquittal was not an option. “There were several on the jury who simply would not acquit, and said so. Our only choices were a hung jury or a conviction. People were tired,” she says. “We wanted to go home.” Stark, in spite of her regret over the outcome, Bennett credits Anna with tremendous fortitude and smarts. “She was the brains of the whole outfit. The FBI didn’t know what they were doing. She was very, very bright, brave, and motivated. I couldn’t have the courage to do anything even remotely like that. I can’t even imagine the stress.”

Since that time, Bennett, Anna has consulted for the FBI on agent training, though she no longer works undercover herself—nor even on a contract basis. For her part, says she would be lucky to have her back, once she finishes her education—a bachelor’s degree is required to be an agent. However, she adds, “I think she wants to move on. Understandable, after what she’s been through.”

Anna says she’s had moments like to be a professor—something in social studies or international relations—and is currently trying to finish school, reestablish relationships with family members and friends, even date. I work my way around to asking her about whether she feels bad about what happened to her one-time “comrades.” “I’m a big believer in personal responsibility,” she says with hesitation. “People make choices. If you want to protest consumerism, or destruction of the planet, don’t drink Coke. Ride your bike. Don’t eat meat or wear fur. These people chose to make a bomb and blow up government property, and now they are paying the price for that choice.”

But then, in a singular reflective moment after I’ve told her about McDavitt’s diminished appearance following his hunger strike, she admits she feels bad for his family, “I would see them in court, and I remember McDavitt talking about how close he was with his family. Compared to the rest of us [in the cell], he had it great, family-wise. They’re nice people.” She knows his parents will pay whatever it costs and do whatever they can to get their son out of jail. I point out that this is what parents do. She says she knows. “But I still feel bad,” she says, her voice trailing off.

Bennett, the juror, tells me that the forensic, a man in his fifties, “teared up” before he had to deliver the verdict. “In my mind, these were just young people who got caught away. People whose hearts were in the right place. I mean,” she pauses, “you know, at least someone is trying to care for our planet and our environment.”

---

**ELLE SHOPPING GUIDE**

**Page 141**

**Cuff by John Hardy**, $888-838-3022.

**Skirt by Etro**, at Etro (NYC, Manhasset, NY; Coral Gables, FL; Las Vegas; Beverly Hills), $212-317-9996.

**Sandals by Cesare Paciotti**, at Cesare Paciotti (NYC, LA), $310-273-3220 or visit cesarepaciotti.com.

**Bag by Fendi**, at Fendi Boutique (NYC, LA, Paris, Tokyo & Co.; nationwide. **Page 144**


**Necklace by Josh Hickey**, at joshhickey.com. **Page 146**

**Bracelets by Tom Tom Store nationwide. **Boot by Jimmy Choo**, at 888-6-CHOO-US. **Bag by Chanel**, at 800-550-8085.

**Vest by Emilio Pucci**, at Emilio Pucci stores nationwide. **Page 150**

**Shirt by Undercover**, at Susan (San Francisco, Burlingame, CA), 650-347-0452. **Shirt by Etro**, at Etro (NYC, Manhasset, NY; Coral Gables, FL; Las Vegas; Beverly Hills), $212-317-9996.

**Bikini by Shay Todd**, at 323-655-3760 or visit shaytodd.com.

**Pins by Giorgio Armani**, at 212-988-9191. **Tote by Old Navy**, at 800-OLD-NAVY or visit oldnavy.com.

**Ring by Mutnaya**, at Mutnaya (NYC, Maspeth, NY; Atlantic City, LA), at 888-685-6856.

**Trousers by Diesel**, at Diesel (NYC, LA), at 877-433-4730 or visit diesel.com.

**Page 153**


**Bag by Esmd**, at esmd.com, 800-869-8424 or visit esmd.com.

**Sandals by Liliane Choe**, at the Shoe Box (Plainview, NY), at 516-931-7775 or visit shoeboxshoebox.com.


**Page 156**

**Cuffs by Marni**, at Marni (NYC; Costo Mesa, LA), at 212-966-1722.

**Skirt by Dres Van Nes**, at similar styles at Jeffrey (NYC, Sandal by Sergio Rossi, at Sergio Rossi (NYC), at 212-956-3803 or visit sergirossi.com. **Tote by Salvatore Ferragamo**, at 800-628-8916. **Page 158**


---

**BURNING UP**

**Page 279**