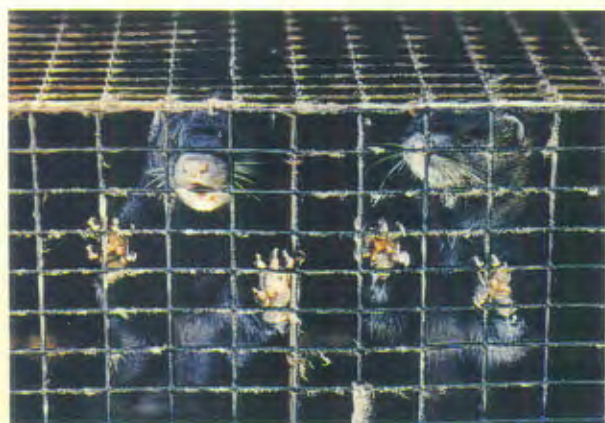


After the **THE** Animal Liberation
Front firebombed a university research lab, federal
TRACKS authorities
accused a young American Indian of ecoterrorism
Rodney Coronado **OF** lived under
ground for more than two years. Now he awaits
sentencing for **THE** a crime that
he may not have committed — but refuses
to condemn **COYOTE**



ANDY NELSON/THE REGISTER GUARD

IN THE COLD PRE-DAWN HOURS OF FEB. 28, 1992, THE MEMBERS OF THE Great Lakes unit of a radical network called the Animal Liberation Front let themselves into the office of Dr. Richard Aulerich, a mink researcher at Michigan State University, in East Lansing. There were already a couple of students in the offices, labs and classrooms of Anthony Hall at that hour — research goes on there around the clock. The ALFers, however, were not doing research. ♣ No one knows if the Great Lakes unit was one person or 20. Whoever they were, they tore the office to pieces, looking for evidence of cruelty in Aulerich's mink data, dumping out files and destroying

B Y D E A N K U I P E R S



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAX AGUILERA-HELLWEG

As the Animal Liberation Front's **BITE BACK** campaign burned on, Coronado was its most visible champion.

computer equipment. When they were done, they planted a simple firebomb and fled. An FBI document said the bomb "consisted of a Sterno can, light bulb, tube of fire paste, accelerant and lighting material." Homemade and utterly effective, the bomb gutted Aulerich's office in only a few minutes.

No one can put a dollar figure on the value of paper and computer files Aulerich lost in the fire. A widely published researcher on mink breeding and minks' sensitivity to PCBs and PBBs and other environmental toxins, he lost 32 years' worth of raw data.

The ALFers didn't stop there. They did what Christine Williams, director of University Laboratory Animal Resources at MSU, called "some commando-type thing" and pried open the roof to get into the main building out at MSU's mink-research farm about four miles away. They destroyed the field office with sulfuric acid — melting data logs, engine parts on feed-preparation machinery and gas chambers used to kill minks — and then descended on the mink sheds themselves. The ALFers moved through the four short sheds, opening all the cages and removing the identification cards used to keep track of experiments, freeing the 350 fierce little predators to mingle, fight, breed, run away or do whatever it is that minks really want to do. Mostly the minks sat in their cages, agitated and frightened. The Great Lakes unit spray-painted **AULERICH TORTURES MINKS** and **FUR IS MURDER** on the walls in blood-red paint. The graffiti was signed **ALF**. Total material damage from the break-ins and fire was estimated at \$70,000 to \$125,000.

Later that day, an ALF press release apparently issued from Ann Arbor, Mich., took credit for the attack — the fifth such assault in a 1991-92 campaign the ALF called Operation Bite Back. This anti-fur operation targeted the researchers and food suppliers for the fur-farm industry, causing more than \$2 million in damage at university farms, labs and feed co-ops in Oregon, Washington and Michigan. Aulerich had been hit because the ALF said he received money from the Mink Farmers Research Foundation, an industry fund used to solve breeding and farming problems that eat up mink ranchers' profits. "Aulerich has helped fur farmers in America exploit and execute millions of animals with regard to neither their ecological importance or their psychological well-being," read the press release. "He has served as the fur-farm industry's problem solver."

The members of the Great Lakes unit left a lot of damage at MSU but very few clues. They left no fingerprints or witnesses.

Their man down south in Ann Arbor, however, was not so careful. He left a trail. He may not have had anything to do with the bombing. But he was the ALF's messenger, its spokesman, its most visible champion and apologist to the press throughout the Bite Back assault. Part Yaqui Indian, part Mexican, then 25

years old and a native of San Jose, Calif., he had a career as a saboteur that had already made him a legend among the monkey wrenchers of the radical environmental movement — word-of-mouth networks like the ALF, Earth First!, the Hunt Saboteurs and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. His media visibility and his acknowledged experience with sabotage also made him a target too enticing for law-enforcement authorities to ignore. He had foiled big-game hunts,

country in 1982 — a Christmas Eve break-in at a Howard University lab, in Washington, D.C., that liberated 30 cats.

The ALF does have spokesmen, and they put themselves at risk. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the largest animal-rights organization in the United States, for instance, supports the ALF by distributing stolen documents and videotaped evidence to the media as part of its whistle-blower program, no questions asked. Rodney Coronado was like a one-man PETA. As Bite Back burned through the latter half of 1991, he appeared on Portland, Ore., TV, explaining the ALF's positions and tactics, and contributed to a *60 Minutes* program.

Not everyone can live with the Animal Liberation Front's idea of nonviolence. Rooted in Gandhian principle and in the practices of such American liberators as Martin Luther King Jr., the ALF declares that life is sacred and any harm or threat to living creatures is "violence." To the ALFers, who categorically maintain they will never threaten a life — human or otherwise — adhering to nonviolence means they might be required to bomb your (evacuated) research lab or burn your hunting truck. Coronado, speaking not as an ALFer but in the general defense of this radical approach to environmentalism, said in 1992, "We consider any action that prioritizes life over property to be nonviolent."

Coronado had become a target long before the MSU attack. He started receiving death threats in October '91 — so many that the FBI began telling his friends and family that it wanted to bring Coronado in for questioning before fur-trade supporters' and radical reactionaries got to him first.

But Coronado didn't want to come in. As much as he feared some unknown assassin, he didn't trust the feds, either. He is a thin, wiry man, standing about 5 feet 11 inches, and his Yaqui ancestry shines through his brown eyes and red-chocolate skin. He felt that American Indians fare less well than others in the hands of the authorities. He was also aware that the feds could use him as an example. With his uncompromising

nature and his status in the movement, even the things Coronado said and the way he said them made him dangerous.

That is why he decided to go underground — to leave his family, the movement and even his closest friends — for two and a half years.

RODNEY CORONADO'S FATHER, REYES (Ray) Coronado Jr., knows that his son first awakened to an ecological consciousness on hunting trips. They used to throw the camping gear into the back of a pickup truck and drive three hours from their home in Morgan Hill, Calif., to the Sierras or the nearby Santa Cruz or Diablo ranges to take their place in the food chain. But it seems that Rodney Coronado's experience of the wild was so intense, so acute, that it inspired a radical break. The wild became his self, became Coronado. As this larger, more inclusive ecological self became threat-



Ray Coronado Jr. and his wife, Sunday, supported Rodney's ecological awakening and have faith in their son's innocence.

gone undercover to investigate the fur-farm industry, rehabbed and released whole game farms, smashed up fur shops, sunk two state-of-the-art Icelandic whaling ships and disrupted pilot-whale hunts in the Faeroe Islands. He had published and conducted workshops widely throughout the environmental movement and worked with several American Indian groups across the continent. Maybe it was inevitable that the feds working to stop the Bite Back campaign would eventually bring him in because they wanted him most of all. Wanted Rodney A. Coronado.

THE ANIMAL LIBERATION FRONT IS SO loosely knit that no one and everyone belongs. There's no membership list, no dues, no uniform. You undertake an "action," you slap the name ALF on it, you're an ALFer. There have been more than 90 known ALF attacks in the United States since the group's first action in this

DEAN KUIPERS, managing editor of *"buH"* magazine, has reported on the radical environmental movement since 1988.

Coronado borrowed thousands of dollars to buy a **FUR FARM**, rehabilitate the animals to the wild and set them free.

ened, Coronado started fighting for his life.

The Coronados are a generous, affectionate middle-class family, pillars of the community in the mixed rural-suburban town of Morgan Hill. Ray Coronado Jr. met a tough, Catholic, Mexican-American life head-on and built Coronado Steel Corp. into a local fixture. Rodney's mother, Sunday, and his older brother, Ray III, work for the family business. His sister, Cynthia, lives in England, but the whole family seems close and proud, meeting often for reunions, baptisms and cookouts.

"Rod was very into his classes, very bright," says Coronado's father. "But he was always more into natural things. Pretty straight guy. He was well liked by all my adult friends. They saw the unusualness in him. Rodney was more geared to things that appealed to us fathers than what appealed to most kids. I think he lived most of his young life for that hunting and fishing time."

"I think when a person is born, they're born with that concern," says Ray Coronado III, "because we — all three of the kids — were brought up the same way. In fact, when me and my sister were too busy on Saturday, Friday nights, attending parties and whatnot, he was totally different, and I don't know why. If I was able to pinpoint that, I think it would be a very large step."

"Instead of the total social gatherings and drinking or whatever," Coronado's brother continues, "him and his friends would kick back at the house or in the garage and talk about wildlife."

Hungry for information and direction, 16-year-old Rodney joined the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society after reading about the group's disrupting the slaughter of fur seals on the ice in eastern Canada. The Sea Shepherds were more hard-core, more confrontational than Greenpeace. Rod sent the Sea Shepherds \$250 of his lawn-mowing money, impressed that they had used their ship to ram and sink outlaw whalers. Open confrontation, he reasoned, was the most direct path to halting the overfishing, furring, logging and dumping that he saw as ecocide.

During a family trip to Vancouver, British Columbia, in the fall of '84, Coronado met Sea Shepherd Capt. Paul Watson at a public hearing on aquarium expansion. The Coronados later met Watson on the docks.

Coronado's brother looks back on it now, incredulous: "They spent an hour or two with Paul, and my parents felt comfortable enough that they actually left Rodney with Paul and kept on going! And then they picked him up a couple of days later on the way back."

The path from Sea Shepherd supporter to saboteur can be a direct one. If there is one thing at which the Sea Shepherds excel, it is education. Radical periodicals such as the *Sea Shepherd Log* and the *Earth First!* journal have inspired thousands of activists to radical action, pumped full of tales of heroism, encounters with wildlife, clandestine high jinks, travel, philosophy, meaningful debate and, most of all, a sense of mission.

Coronado graduated from high school and left the house at 18. He went straight to the Sea Shepherds, in Santa Monica, Calif., a sort of "ecotage" academy.

"I sent him to Honolulu to work on the Whaling

Wall, the big mural," says Watson, smiling, an affable, quick-lipped former Canadian Coast Guard officer with a shock of silver-white hair. He keeps a busy office in Marina del Rey, a Los Angeles beach community. "It showed to me that he was willing to do anything. Then we took him directly from there to Nova Scotia, and then he spent four months working in an engine room and then participated in the Faeroes campaign in 1985 [to stop the hunting of pilot whales] and then again in the Faeroes campaign in 1986.



Coronado lived in this room for six months in 1994 on the Pascua Yaqui reservation, about 10 miles southwest of Tucson, Ariz.

"During '85, when the ship was in London, he got involved with the British animal-rights movement," Watson says. "In '85 we had mapped out Reykjavik [Iceland] harbor, and he'd been involved in that. Then in '86 he recruited David Howitt and did the Iceland thing really on his own initiative."

The "Iceland thing" is the most expensive bit of sabotage Coronado has ever claimed. In 1986 he and Howitt spent a month working in a whale-processing plant in Reykjavik. At the time, Iceland was whaling in open defiance of a worldwide whaling moratorium. After casing the operation for a month, Howitt and Coronado went on a destructo. They tore up the plant's office, leaving logs and computers in ruins, then rushed to the harbor, boarded two huge whaling ships and opened their seacocks, sinking them up to their masts. A guard was sleeping on the third ship, so Howitt and Coronado left it alone, caught a cab to the airport and fled the country.

In 1987, Howitt and Coronado were living on a Sea Shepherd ship in Vancouver harbor when Coronado admits he helped smash up some fur shops in Van-

couver as a member of the ALF. He claims this was his only ALF action. He was arrested and posted \$10,000 bail. Both men were given permission to pilot the Sea Shepherd vessel down to California and never went back, leaving outstanding warrants behind.

Coronado kept tightening his own focus. Late in 1987 he helped organize the Hunt Saboteurs working in California, a network of Earth Firsters and unaffiliated wild children who tromp out in the fields with air horns and antics to break up big-game trophy hunts. The Hunt Sabs, as they're known, take their lives in their own hands, running before the sights of armed hunters, and this kind of activity earned Coronado and the others no small notoriety.

The Hunt Sabs, however, are an on-again, off-again entity, assembled for only a couple of actions each year and then disbanded. Coronado's organizing skills and media savvy were better suited to sustained projects. While living in Santa Cruz in 1990, he and fellow Hunt Sab Jonathan Paul formed a sub rosa team called Global Investigations. In March they began a video investigation of fur farming.

Posing as prospective fur farmers, Coronado and Paul visited numerous fur farms in the Northwest and videotaped mink-ranching techniques. Coronado's summary of the experience described the lurid scene: "Most of the animals we documented are now dead. Crushed, electrocuted, gassed or their necks broken, their skins now fill processing plants, awaiting auction in spring. We were not able to save these animals, as our investigation was focused instead on obtaining evidence that would hopefully prevent any sensitive individual from supporting [the fur industry] or wearing fur. One particular farm in Montana, where we witnessed and documented the neck-breaking of over 100 minks, was particularly horrific. Being a small operation, the 'farmer' felt comfortable literally bending these animals' necks backward and crushing down until the sound of vertebrae popping was heard over the animals' screams. Sometimes he failed, instead breaking the jaw, only to have the crippled but conscious animal try to crawl away to safety. Needless to say, very few if any animals ever escape this hideous torture."

This Global Investigations videotape was later featured as part of the *60 Minutes* hit piece on the fur industry that aired in December 1991 during the middle of the ALF's Bite Back campaign.

In the winter of 1990, after having completed the videotaping for the Global Investigations piece, Coronado moved briefly to the wild Siskiyou Mountains of southern Oregon and founded the Coalition Against Fur Farms. According to Coronado, two other environmental activists associated with CAFF were Deb Stout and Kim Trimiew. CAFF shared an Ashland, Ore., post-office box with the Southern Oregon Hunt Sabs. According to Coronado, CAFF was formed to "fight for the total abolition of all fur farming" and, specifically, to act as an information clearinghouse and public voice for groups working toward the abolition of the fur industry, including the Animal Liberation Front.

Shortly after Coronado went underground, **FEDERAL AGENTS** came whupping over his cabin in a helicopter.

CAFF's one big project, however, turned out to be much more hands-on than perhaps even Coronado had imagined. On Dec. 9, 1990, Bruce Campbell of Campbell's Fur Farm, in Lakeside, Mont., the ranch shown on *60 Minutes*, offered to sell his farm to "Jim Perez" — one of Coronado's aliases. Campbell, a veteran biologist then with Montana's Fish, Wildlife and Parks department, evidently wanted out of the business and saw an opportunity in Perez.

The CAFFers quickly organized a loan from two animal-rights groups, the California Animal Defense and the Anti-Vivisection League. Jim Perez appeared at Campbell's farm on Dec. 19, 1990, with \$9,000 and a truck and carted away the whole operation: 60 minks, four bobcats, two lynx, the cages and food.

The CAFFers were not so naive as to think they could just drive their critters to the nearest national park and bust 'em loose. The animals needed painstaking rehabilitation. They needed to learn how to be wild again.

The bobcats and lynx had been raised in captivity. They had to have their instincts and skills stimulated. The minks were even more complex. Although minks are native to North America, farmed minks have been bred in captivity and their genetic makeup altered for fur-color traits since the early 1900s. They aren't wild. They are genetically distinct from wild minks. Because farmed animals could carry diseases or genetic mutations that can wipe out native populations, most animal-rights organizations don't support releasing farm-raised game into the wild.

Coronado and the CAFFers borrowed another several thousand dollars and spent six months in the dirt, studying and rehabbing the animals for release. They moved the animals into the remote, foggy mountains of the Olympic Peninsula, just across Puget Sound from Seattle, and started training the animals to kill live food. According to a long explanation of the rehab later printed in the *Earth First!* journal, Coronado then went undercover to get the genetic and disease information he lacked.

Jim Perez spent the next two months in and out of the Seattle Fur Exchange, attending fur-industry events and grilling every expert he met about the survival odds of farm-raised minks in the wild. By mid-February he had the information that assured him that his minks, if released, would blend back into the native populations. The minks and the cats were blood tested, and he insists they were found to be free of any common diseases. The CAFFers began releasing the animals in April. The first to go were the lynx because they were the wildest. On foot, five activists — one of whom was Coronado — carried the lynx in their clumsy separate boxes for two days and released them together on the edge of a large roadless area.

THE CAFF REHABILITATION PROJECT WAS wrapped up in July 1991. As far as anyone knows, Coronado was at the sanctuary in Washington in June when the ALF launched Operation Bite Back.

Around 4 a.m. on June 10, 1991, several ALFers crept onto the grounds of the Oregon State University Experimental Fur Farm in the sleepy town of Corvallis. A firebomb — the same kind later used at MSU — destroyed a feed barn, along with the food supply for 1,300 live minks, including 1,000 infants. The ALFers broke into the office and destroyed data bases. Damage was estimated at \$125,000; the research data was unrecoverable.

The ALF dropped a videotape of the raid and a press

hopes of causing maximum economic damage to an industry that profits from the misery and exploitation of fur animals" and warned of further acts of "economic sabotage."

Because arson was suspected, the Portland office of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms began an investigation that quickly turned into a federal task force including state police and campus security agencies. The FBI was immediately involved because the crimes involved interstate travel and the ALF

was allegedly a nationwide network. Their investigation became the biggest single shakedown in the history of the environmental movement, involving grand juries in four states subpoenaing scores of activists and the jailing of four unindicted persons for about five months.

Exhausted and broke in the wake of the rehab, Coronado received an invitation to come to Pullman, Wash., to housesit for Rik Scarce, a grad student in sociology at Washington State University and the author of one of the best books on the radical environmental movement, *Eco-Warriors*. Coronado broke down the animal sanctuary and headed to Pullman. Scarce and his family left town, leaving Coronado in the house.

In the late night of Aug. 12, 1991, a third Bite Back attack tore into Washington State University facilities in Pullman. Coronado's presence in Pullman at that time made him a suspect. The ALFers broke into the U.S. Department of Agriculture animal-disease research unit, on the eastern edge of campus, and released seven coyotes. Six healthy minks were released. The building wasn't torched.

That same night, however, the ALFers trashed WSU mink researcher John Gorham's office in exactly the same manner as the OSU and MSU hits, then drowned it in hydrochloric acid. Ten mice were taken. Damage was listed as \$50,000 to \$100,000. Spray-painted messages said, AMERICAN WILDLIFE... LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT ALONE, and, FRED GILBERT, YOUR (sic) NEXT! At that time, Gilbert, a WSU researcher, was experi-

menting with traps for fur-bearing animals. WSU admitted having received money from the fur industry.

Three of the coyotes were later recaptured, two were killed by cars and two escaped. The minks and mice got away.

The next morning someone faxed a press release from a Kinko's copy shop

just across the state line in Moscow, Idaho. By November '91, then WSU police chief David Wareing acknowledged to the *Moscow-Pullman Daily News* that the police had composite drawings of a man and a woman seen at the Kinko's. The man was believed to be Coronado. The task force called him a "person of interest" in the WSU raid, and he was wanted for questioning. No arrest warrant was issued, however, until July 1993.

The police began circulating identikit drawings in



Richard Aulerich in his office at Michigan State University after the ALF attack [above]. The ALF owns up to deeds at Oregon State University [below].

release at a Portland TV station, claiming full responsibility. Dr. Kelvin Koong, who was then head of the OSU Department of Animal Sciences, said the center studied nutrition problems, reproduction and fecology management for minks and worked directly to benefit the 40-odd mink ranchers in Oregon.

The ALF was known in those parts; a University of Oregon laboratory farm in nearby Eugene had been raided in 1986, and 125 monkeys, rabbits, hamsters and rats were released. Four men were later arrested, and Roger Troen, then of Portland, was convicted of burglary, theft and conspiracy and got five years' probation. Charges against the other three were dismissed "without prejudice" — meaning charges could be reinstated if more evidence turned up. Those three were Bill Keogh, Crescenzo Vellucci and Coronado's partner in Global Investigations, Jonathan Paul.

During the next few weeks, it became apparent that the Corvallis attack was the start of something larger. The ALF was targeting the Mink Farmers Research Foundation, trying to knock out the R&D that made mink farming more profitable and thus speed the decline of an already-shrinking industry.

On June 15, 1991, a firebomb gutted the Northwest Farm Foods Cooperative, in Edmonds, Wash., which supplied animal bedding and foods to fur farms, causing \$800,000 damage. The press release said the ALF's Western Wildlife Cell planted incendiaries "with the



When Coronado was arrested, the Yaqui were stunned. Doubts still linger over who it was who **TURNED HIM IN** to the feds.

October '91. After the composites were printed in newspapers and shown on TV, Coronado and the CAFFers began to receive death threats on their hot line.

The fur industry was apoplectic. In the June 24, 1991, issue of *Fur Age Weekly*, the oldest and most widely read fur-trade publication, the National Board of Fur Farm Organizations offered a \$35,000 reward "for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the activists who committed the crimes." Coronado and the rest of the animal-rights community felt that this reward was so easy to misinterpret as a "bounty" on their persons that they started keeping their heads down.

Coronado spent the winter of 1991-92 in and out of a cabin up above the Little Applegate River, deep in a remote tall-tree wilderness about 25 miles southwest of Medford, Ore. Mark Bey, once part of the Hunt Sabs, confirms that Coronado rented the cabin for \$50 plus some maintenance. The cabin stood across a road from a communal farm, an "intentional community" known as the Trillium Farm, which offered to help with mailings for Coronado's work with CAFF.

The ALF's Operation Bite Back, however, did not go into hibernation. On Dec. 21, 1991, ALF's Western Wildlife Cell torched and completely destroyed a mink-processing plant on the farm of Hynek Malecky, in rural Yamhill County, Ore. The press release ended with the words: "On behalf of the mink, fox, bobcat, lynx and coyote nations, ALF shall wage non-violent war against the fur trade. *Until the last fur farm is brunt to the ground.*"

CORONADO CALLED ME FROM LOS ANGELES in April '92, two months after the MSU attack and a year before he was under indictment. It was the first time we'd ever spoken to each other. I flew down from San Francisco to meet him at the Sea Shepherd office in Santa Monica.

We sat at a cafe on the Venice boardwalk on April 29 and talked and laughed as the conversation quickly got thick. He threw bread to the pigeons, and people flashed by on Rollerblades. Later that evening, South Central Los Angeles would erupt in the Rodney King riots, but during our interview the world was still awaiting the verdict. I had been traveling around North America with the radical movement for several years, reporting on no-compromise environmental principles, direct action and the emerging philosophies of conservation biology and deep ecology. Given Coronado's history with CAFF and the Sea Shepherds, I had wanted to interview him for months.

During the investigation of the MSU raid in February, the home of a PETA volunteer in Maryland had

been searched by some members of the task force, and Coronado had obtained some of the paperwork used to secure a search warrant in that raid. Among the papers was a troubling affidavit given by Thomas D. Stieler, a special agent of the FBI. The affidavit made Coronado want to call me. The feds had apparently connected him not only to the MSU attack but to other Bite Back actions as well. In the affidavit these lines appear: "SA [Special Agent] Robert Houston of the Spokane Resident Agency of the FBI stated that the ANIMAL LIBERATION FRONT (ALF), in particular, RODNEY ADAM CORONADO, date of birth July 3, 1966, was responsible for the destruction of animal research facilities at Washington State University (WSU) on Aug. 12-13, 1991."



Coronado going into federal court in Tucson for a bail hearing in October '94

Coronado's paranoia peaked. Why hadn't he been indicted? He'd talked informally with agents on the phone but had never been arrested. In October 1991 agents grilled his mom and dad in Morgan Hill, trying to scare them into divulging some other information about the Bite Back raids. They knew nothing. Coronado himself was easy enough to find at this time, working openly at the Sea Shepherd offices, then in Santa Monica. Were they trying to break him, make him confess to something?

"I've been kinda surprised that, like, a furrier or somebody hasn't gone and burned down a place with somebody in it, just to discredit the ALF," Coronado said that day at the cafe. "Because one of the things the FBI told my mom when they were trying to interrogate her was that 'Look, Rod's been working with bombs, and unless you help us find him, he's gonna kill somebody eventually. And once he does that, we're gonna have to go after him for murder charges.'"

"That was like — whoa! — where did you get that from? Does that mean that they're gonna do their little thing and somebody's gonna accidentally be killed and conveniently I'm gonna be the suspect, or what?"

Coronado was scared. While he continued to preface all remarks by denying that he was ever the bomber, he never backed down from his role as ALF press agent.

"I knew we in CAFF were gonna put our heads on the chopping block," Coronado told me. "But I'm not the one out there breaking into buildings or releasing animals and burning things down. I consider it to be such a minute risk to defend those people who are doing that. These people create this wave; it's our responsibility to follow through with it."

Coronado was obsessed with the meaning of the fur industry's \$35,000 reward. He clearly felt there was a price on his head, that he was wanted, dead or alive.

That day, Coronado told me he was going underground. He left Los Angeles a day or two after our

interview. Into the forgotten corners of the country, which is really right where we all live.

FOR WHATEVER REASON, AGENTS DID not pick up Coronado while he was working at the Sea Shepherd office in Los Angeles. Just days after our interview, after he had told me he was going underground and had left L.A., federal agents came whupping over the wet, green Siskiyou in a helicopter to descend on Coronado's cabin in Oregon. According to Mark Bey and members of the Trillium community, some of whom witnessed the raid, approximately 10 camouflage-clad agents carrying assault rifles smashed down the door of the cabin. Coronado, of course, wasn't there. Another man, who was reportedly visiting the cabin at the time because he was interested in renting it, stood by, stunned.

That sealed Coronado's paranoia. As far as he was concerned, they had come to kill him.

Just as Coronado disappeared into the American night, his friends, co-workers and the rest of the animal-rights movement started to appear — in court. Grand juries seated in Eugene, Ore., Spokane, Wash., and Grand Rapids, Mich., began raining down subpoenas all over the country. At the same time, the FBI began hovering so tightly around key activists and their families that they began to cry harassment. Spokane Judge W. Fremming Nielsen eventually jailed Jonathan Paul, author Rik Scarce and CAFFers Deb Stout and Kim Trimiew for about five months each for refusing to cooperate with the investigation.

Coronado was headed for Indian country. He said he "did some traveling cross-country," camping solo for a while. Activists had donated some money when they heard he was going underground, and he also had some savings from living on the cheap in Oregon.

"I just needed to be on my own a lot," Coronado said later, "because I realized that at that point, anybody I was hanging out with I was going to be exposing to danger."

During the summer of '92, agents looking for Coronado twice boarded Sea Shepherd vessels traveling north from San Pedro, Calif., to confront Japanese drift netters in the North Pacific. During a driving rainstorm in Santa Cruz, agents of the FBI, ATF, U.S. Customs and Coast Guard searched the two ships on the campaign. When the Shepherds next made landfall, on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, they were ordered in, but Coronado wasn't aboard.

Coronado bounced from reservation to reservation, often contacting American Indians under a pseudonym, and veered away from using movement contacts to help him. From late May to October '92 he stayed on one reservation. After October he moved to another reservation and rented a cabin, spending the winter of '92 on his own, then moving again in the spring.

"In spring '93 I attended a conference in Rapid City, S.D., with some Native American ecologists," Coronado says. "It's called Warriors of Wisdom. So I attended this conference, and I networked with a lot of Native American people."

Coronado began for the first time to link his ecological consciousness to his native ancestry. He began writing grants as a volunteer, always under an assumed name, raising funds for education and actions around the idea of cultural ecology, a comprehensive understanding of the medicinal and spiritual [Cont. on 74]

COYOTE

[Cont. from 58] interdependence of indigenous communities and their native plants and animals.

During that same summer, a new friend invited Coronado to his first sun dance, where he worked as a fire keeper for the sweat lodges. He was invited to a second.

"I knew all along that the sun dance for the Plains people was one of the most intense ceremonies of their ceremonial cycle," Coronado says. "And I was overwhelmed. I thought it was beautiful. There was a lot of strength there. They wanted me to pledge to dance the following year, being very open and inviting."

"Something in me just told me: 'This is not right. I'm not a Lakota or a Cheyenne. I've got my own culture. And my own culture I don't know anything about.'"

"As the intensity of the season got stronger," Coronado says, "I was feeling more and more lost. And on the final day of the sun dance, when I was in the arbors supporting a Yaqui brother who was dancing the sun dance, I told myself, 'I gotta go to Arizona. I gotta find my elders who are alive, and I have to learn my culture.'"

"So the day the sun dance ended, I went home, packed up all my stuff into my car and drove 26 hours to Tucson. And arrived in late July of 1993."

THE OLD WOMEN SAID HE CAME among the Yaqui like an angel. He called himself Martin Rubio. Rubio is his mother's maiden name, known to the Yaqui. He had no family. No drunkenness or addictions. No old scores to settle. No past. All he wanted was to serve the Yaqui culture. He wanted to come home.

"Martin came to my husband, who is the chief and the spiritual leader of the Yaqui," Kathy Valencia tells me. "He came to him in February '94, and he said that he was Yaqui and that he wanted to learn his culture."

Valencia and I sat on the back patio of the house where Martin Rubio lived, with sunset breaking over the desert, lighting up a profusion of hanging plants and potted flowers. I had gone to see Don Anselmo Valencia, tribal chief of the Pascua Yaqui, but he wasn't much in the mood to talk and said, "You better go out and talk to my wife." The patio was filled with the chatter of birds and the honking of geese, and a tiny Sika deer stuck one long antler through the chicken-wire fence. The cold smell of desert autumn drifted down off Black Mountain and over the rows of houses on the 900-acre reservation about 10 miles southwest of Tucson. Two TVs blasted

in the tiny house, right through dinner, right through everything.

"Martin served the culture through Lent and into Easter," Kathy Valencia says. "My husband said he could stay here if he wanted to help him. So Martin said, 'OK. I'd really like that.'"

Martin Rubio was an answer to Don Anselmo's prayers. At last he had found a young man who cared about the spiritual well-being of the people. Don Anselmo had hoped to instill a traditional Yaqui spirituality into modern reservation life, which is now characterized by unemployment, alcoholism, gambling and gangs.

They set to work immediately. Together they created the Youth Junta, which Rubio ran in conjunction with the Valencias, other elders and other young teachers. At the same time, he networked with the Student Environmental Action Coalition at the University of Arizona. When he could, Rubio brought the two together. He drove many of the kids to an event called SEAC-otopia, up on the embattled crown of Mount Graham, where the University of Arizona is building an observatory on a site sacred to the Apache.

Rubio was drawn deeper into the confidence and spiritual duties of Don Anselmo. For years, Don Anselmo had been traveling to his tribe's million-acre reservation in Rio Yaqui, Mexico, helping to mediate internal problems. Historically, the Yaqui are guerrillas; they are now plagued by infighting, engaged in a struggle over water and mineral rights with the Mexican government. Rubio became Don Anselmo's driver on trips to the Rio Yaqui.

Rubio was also invited to join the Yaqui Coyote dancers, one of four dance societies that perform ritual dances in the complex cycle of Yaqui ceremonies.

"Martin embodies the reasons behind the Coyote Society," says Joe Cancio, leader of the Coyotes. "The Coyote Society and the bow elders were entrusted to keep the pueblo protected from outside forces, from influences — alcohol — and they were the society that doled out the punishment. They usually try to work with that offense and find out what the problems were. And Martin has that heart. That good heart — you take with him right away. The reason that I would like to see him back here is 'cause the kids here need role models.'"

Rubio had lived with the Valencias six months when it all came apart. On the morning of Sept. 28, 1994, he was alone and washing dishes when there was a knock on the door. It was a white woman, a tribal cop. In a flurry of fast talk, she told Rubio that someone had brought an injured hawk to the fire station, and they knew by reputation that the Valencias were good with animals, and would he take a look? Without thinking, he jumped in the car with her. At the fire station the doors were rolled

down, an unusual occurrence that gave him a moment of doubt. Rubio had been working openly with the Yaqui for more than a year, but WANTED posters with his picture and real name on them hung in post offices all over the West. He noticed that the cop hung back.

"As we were walking toward the door, she says, 'Yeah, it's right in the door, there. You can't miss it,'" he recalls. "So I opened the door, and as soon as I walked into the building — boom! — agents are everywhere. Tackling me and handcuffing me and saying, 'Rodney,' and stuff, so I knew what was happening right at that point. That was it! Tricked!"

The Yaqui, who had taken Rodney Coronado into their hearts as a man named Martin Rubio, were stunned. Doubts still linger over who actually turned him in to the feds. The day I visited the Valencias, only eight days after Coronado's arrest, Don Anselmo came home at dusk. He was tired. The Valencias graciously invited me to dinner, and we ate through the roar of the TV. After dinner, we sat, and he talked about the situation on the Rio Yaqui, about poverty — but we didn't talk much about Coronado. Maybe he was only tired, but losing Coronado seemed to have crushed his dreams.

CORONADO HAS NEVER DENIED — AT least not to me — that he was in Michigan at the time of the MSU attack. He told me he had traveled to Michigan with Deb Stout and Kim Trimiew in February '92. Deb's father, David Stout, is a United Methodist minister in the small, conservative town of Midland. He says the three activists stayed with him and his wife for a few days in February. As far as he was concerned, their visit was purely social. A quiet, mild-mannered man, Stout says he didn't find out about the raid at Michigan State University until weeks or months after it happened, when FBI agents began coming around.

On the morning of the MSU raid, a Federal Express package was sent from Ann Arbor to the home of a PETA volunteer in Montgomery County, Md. Inside were slides, documents and computer disks stolen from Aulerich's office, intended for distribution to the media. There was also a Hi-8 video, showing, according to an FBI affidavit, a masked white male taking a mink that had been released at the time and holding up a severed otter head.

That Federal Express package never made it to the house of the PETA volunteer. Fed Ex intercepted it because it was billed to an invalid credit-card number. The sender's name and address — Leonard Robideau, 2771 Tecumseh Ave., Toledo, Ohio 42138 — was also fabricated.

Coronado today acknowledges that he sent that package.

On March 6, 1992, a platoon of fed-

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eral agents descended on the home of the PETA volunteer and walked off with an estimated 10 cardboard boxes of materials, including a previous Fed Ex package from Coronado. These Fed Ex packages were the basis for his July 1993 indictment, which charged him with arson, interstate travel to commit arson, extortion, use of fire to commit a felony and possession of stolen property in connection with the MSU firebombing. Coronado's attorney, Fred Dilley, insists that the evidence used to indict his client is circumstantial at best.

Coronado also does not deny that he was the man at the Kinko's shop in Moscow delivering the ALF's messages after the Washington State University hit in Pullman in August 1991.

"The WSU police and the FBI said that I had faxed a press release from the raid to UPI or AP, and, yeah, I admitted that," says Coronado. "I got used to being at Rik Scarce's house and opening the door at 6:30 or 7 a.m. every day and picking up the newspaper and reading it. Except on this particular day, when I opened it up, it was an 8-and-a-half-by-11 sheet of paper that had the press release on it. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what had went on."

Coronado does not regret going underground. Maybe it saved his life.

"One of the last conversations I had was with Dave Howitt, after he had just returned after being subpoenaed by the grand jury in April '92," Coronado says. "That's when he told me, 'Oh, you know that [U.S. attorneys and the FBI] told me that they think that your life is extremely threatened by people within the fur industry who want to get you.'"

"But what I didn't know about was whether the threat was an FBI threat being hidden behind the guise of a legitimate threat," he continues. "Knowing what I have studied about the counterintelligence programs against the American Indian movement, I knew that they used the goons a lot to do their dirty work. I don't know how well these guys stay true to the path of justice. The evidence, for me, shows Pedro Bissonette, Tina Trudell, Anna Mae Aquash — a lot of dead bodies of Indian activists. So my attitude was 'Time to go do some back-packing and do some thinking. Just make a summer out of it.'"

Coronado has said that he does not regret speaking out for the ALF. "That's my job," Coronado says, downplaying the risk. "At real risk were those animals, were the people who were actually doing these actions. My part was support. As far as I was aware of, there was no illegality — I could tell that the press release was a photocopy. It wasn't an original. It didn't include any stolen documents or anything. It was within my framework. And I wasn't about to drop the ball for these people who had risked their lives for these animals, who

I believe belong in the wild. As long as nobody was injured, I was going to express how much I disapproved of [the animals' treatment]."

But could Coronado possibly believe that arson and acid attacks are effective tactics? Aren't they more likely to plant fear in the public's mind instead of winning its support?

"Well, I think that it's undeniable that it helps the critters in the labs," he says without hesitation, then adds with a chuckle: "I think it's also undeniable that it doesn't help critters like me. I have no right to say whether it's right or wrong because it's not the tactic that I participate in. That's a decision for the people who did it to make. My decision was whether I was going to be a spokesperson for such tactics."

"IT'S STILL WEIRD TO SIT HERE AT THIS desk and think that there was some terrorist sitting right here doing his work," says Christine Williams, director of University Laboratory Animal Resources at MSU. "It still bothers me now."

Williams runs a hand over the equipment in the office that the ALF destroyed with sulfuric acid almost three years ago. All of the MSU farms are Williams' domain, several thousand acres, making her the godmother of all the animals at one of the top agricultural schools in the nation.

Williams doesn't trust me, and I don't blame her. As we stroll through the mink barns during a foggy January thaw, I admit I'd rather see these black-and-pastel terrors out in a wet ditch somewhere cracking crawdads instead of licking mink chow off a wire cage. But that gut feeling conflicts with the facts. Besides providing help to fur farmers, Aulerich's research on these farm-raised minks generates data on environmental toxins that threaten wild minks around the Great Lakes. If, in fact, these farm animals provide any information that helps preserve wild minks, the ALF may be shooting its "wild predators belong in the wild" philosophy in the foot.

In Williams' office I ask her how she reacted to the ALF's invasion.

"You feel violated," Williams says quietly. "It's something like having your house broken into or being attacked personally. I wouldn't go near Aulerich's office for two weeks when I got back here."

"This is not Fort Knox," Williams says. "You can't run it like that. There are geographic issues, and there are also philosophic issues. This is a public university. What choice do you have? Have everyone locked down like in a jail? What's a few more keys? Not much."

Williams is a direct, likable woman who doesn't seem to get overexcited even when offering her low opinion of ALFers. "I think they're in the same category as people who shoot people who work in abortion clinics," she says matter-of-factly. "This is not civilized. It's not [Cont. on 76]

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[Cont. from 75] a way that you'd hope to resolve issues, is it? I mean, are we really going to have to do this on every issue we disagree with? If Coronado has quit sinking whale ships, obviously he's had some second thoughts about this as a method of resolving issues."

Aulerich has not talked to reporters since the attack, but MSU spokesmen are quick to point out that he has also studied a genetically deaf variety of minks as a model for research into human deafness. Or as Karen Handel, a former spokeswoman for the Fur Information Council of America, says: "This [was] not an attack on the fur industry. This particular incident, the Michigan attack, that's a medical-research facility."

That's a bit of sloppy spin control, really, but the ALF is just as sloppy. The fire meant for Aulerich spread into Professor Karen Chou's office next door. She studies the chemical transformation that makes animal sperm viable for reproduction, but her long-term project is to use animal sperm as a cellular model, replacing whole live rabbits and rats in lab tests. Which is exactly what the ALF wants. Her primary study was destroyed by the fire. Three years later she still hasn't found the opportunity to redo it.

Chou is also wary when we meet. She has refused to talk to reporters but was finally overwhelmed by the irony of the ALF's mistake. In a slight Taiwanese accent Chou stresses that the ALF must understand very little of the scientific process.

"I started this because I want to deal with the environmental issues," Chou says. "This sperm research, that was the intention. Environmental toxicology is another subject I'm deeply involved with; it is my expertise area."

Chou condemns the ALF for leaving behind something worse than charred notebooks: fear. "If we put someone living in fear," she whispers, "then that's the highest crime possible already. And this action put lots of people living in fear."

"You look at the process of civilization," Chou says. "What draws the difference between peace and war is democracy. If you can talk about it. If you can debate. You're willing to express yourself in a peaceful way. And these people didn't choose to approach that way. It cannot be effective."

I wanted to visit a fur farm and talk to the real farmers on the ground. But the industry itself is scared. I asked the Fur Information Council if it could help me find a farmer who cared enough to talk. Or if I could maybe speak to someone who ran the Seattle Fur Exchange. The people at FICA firmly declined, saying they were sure

I'd turn it into a hit piece.

Their paranoia raises serious questions: Are FICA and the fur farmers afraid of receiving bad press because the American public would be revolted by their methods? Or are they afraid that anyone named in an article becomes a target?

If the latter is true, then the ALF has truly had the negative impact for which we should condemn any terrorist organization in that it has created an atmosphere of enforced silence. No one wants to talk when the slightest disagreement could earn him an early morning firebomb.

JUST DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS '94, A judge in Kalamazoo, Mich., released Coronado on \$650,000 bail. He went straight back to living with the Valentinas. Don Anselmo had had a life-threatening bout of pneumonia. The kids in the Youth Junta needed explanations about how Martin Rubio was really some other guy with a big history. Time was suddenly so short for a 28-year-old man.

Time is exactly what Coronado is considering now. Since his arrest, it has become clearer and clearer that he does face indictments for being the mailman at Bite Back bombings and other actions. To keep his court expenses and possible jail time to a minimum, he has decided to accept a plea bargain. In return for not having to testify against anyone else, Coronado has accepted that he may have to spend months or years in prison. Now restricted to Pima County, Ariz., he must appear in court in Michigan on July 27 in order for the judge to render a decision on the plea bargain.

"The evidence is heavy that there would be a difficult time fighting the fact that I was in Michigan at the time and that I did send those Fed Ex packages," Coronado says.

"I'm happy with this decision because I still strongly feel I did the right thing by being in Michigan and helping to spread information and support that raid," he continues. "I know what I did. If that is a crime, and if you're going to punish me for it, then do it. I'd rather do the time than have to denounce someone whose actions I support or have to disassociate myself from the role I had. This way I'm able to deal with the truth. That has always been my way."

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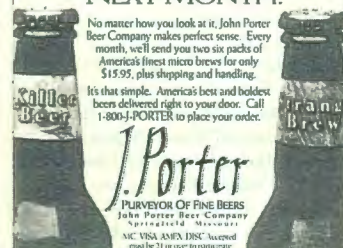
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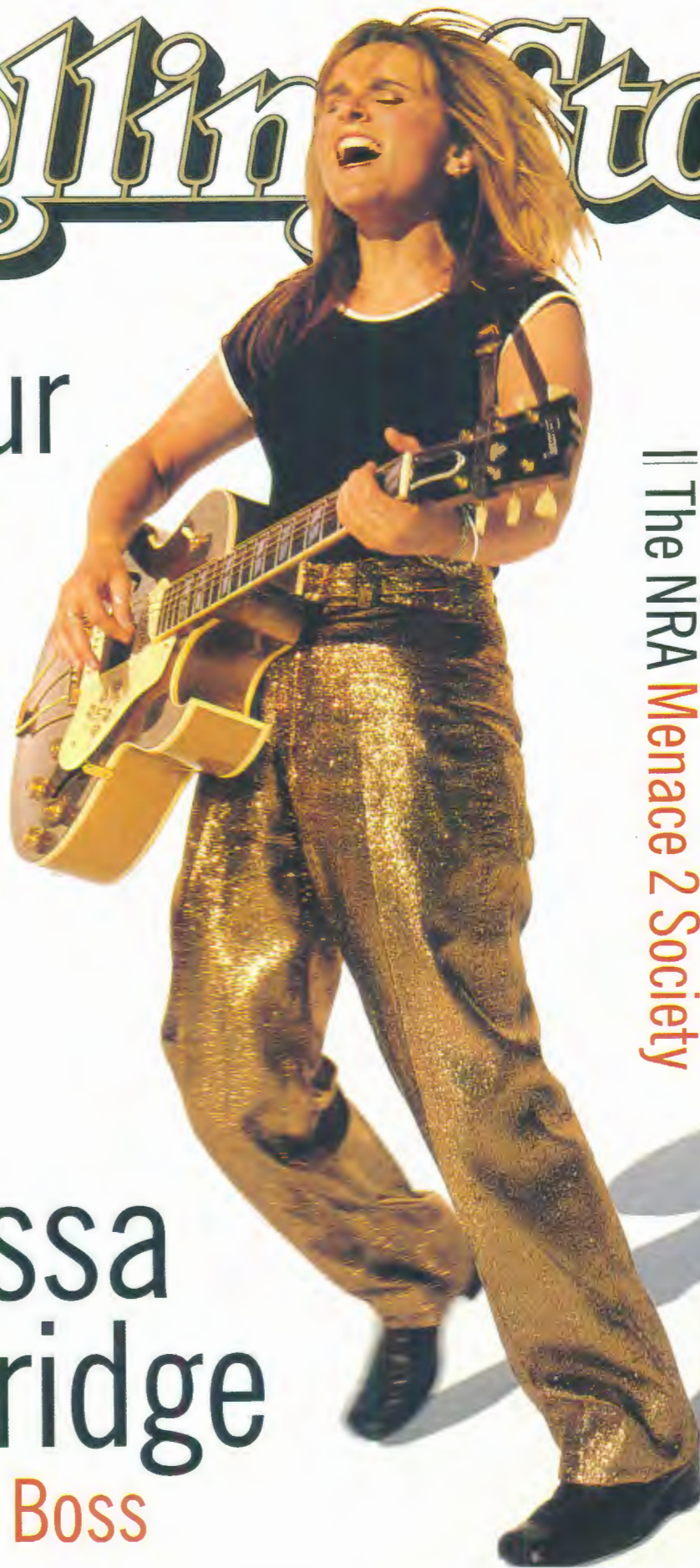
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