

# How FBI Spied on Radicals

## Los Angeles

By day, "Christine Daley" worked as a nurse's aide in the Hollywood home of a man in his 80s.

Actually, authorities say, she was Judith Emily Bissell, fugitive member of the Weather Underground who allegedly spent her evenings planning bombings, assassinations and the overthrow of the United States government.

In May, the 33-year-old Mrs. Bissell cautiously took into her confidence a man also in his 30s known to her only as Ralph. He had come highly recommended.

For the previous two years Ralph had lived in San Francisco with Clayton Van Lydegraf, 62, leader of the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, the above ground support for the Weather Underground.

But now Ralph said he wanted to go underground to join the Los Angeles-based feminist-oriented faction known as the Revolutionary Committee which had split from the Weather Underground.

For more than six months, authorities say, Ralph and his friend Dick spent frequent evenings studying revolution with Mrs. Bissell and her associates, and weekends in the desert near Barstow sharpening their marksmanship with pistols and rifles.

However, Ralph's and Dick's days were usually spent in dramatically different fashion: writing reports to their supervisors in the FBI.

Both men are FBI agents who

lived undercover as radicals for an incredible four and seven years, respectively. They still would be living underground if the group they infiltrated had not plotted and come within hours of planting a bomb at the Fullerton offices of Republican state Senator John Briggs, authorities say.

On November 19, Bissell, Van Lydegraf and three associates — Thomas Justesen, Marc Curtis Perry and a still unidentified woman — were arrested in Los Angeles and in Houston in what was believed to be the first-ever multiple arrest of suspected Weather Underground members. They were arrest-

ed on state and federal charges of conspiracy and possession of explosives, and are being held in lieu of \$500,000 bond apiece.

Although federal authorities previously had informants who penetrated the tight security of the Weather Underground, which claims responsibility for 30 bombings since 1970, this was the first time actual FBI agents had ever done so.

Now, a rare glimpse of life underground — for both the agents and the radicals — can be constructed through documents on file

*Back Page Col. 1*

## From Page 1

in Los Angeles Superior Court, interviews with various individuals familiar with the investigation and the friends, neighbors and employers of some of the suspects.

Dozens of once highly confidential reports, describing meetings between the two undercover agents and the suspects, were filed with the court in order to secure search warrants for five locations where nearly 100 pounds of explosives and a half dozen weapons were found. The FBI reports, totaling more than 200 pages, span the period between May and November.

Although they ultimately will have to testify publicly in court, FBI agents Richard J. Giannotti, code name Ralph, and William D. Reagan, code name Dick, declined to be interviewed.

The FBI also is reluctant at this point to talk about the episode for fear of tipping off radicals to the tactics of other possible undercover agents.

Details of the agents' personal lives or law enforcement careers before going underground are not available. But from a variety of sources, this much is known.

Giannotti's and Reagan's assignment was a tightly guarded secret, made known to only a handful of the highest officials in the FBI. Local police did not learn of the undercover operation until early November.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul Flynn, who associates recalled would mysteriously disappear at times, saying he could not state where he was going, was assigned to advise the agents on just what activities they could and could not

engage in with the suspects.

The concern was to avoid any action that later could be construed as illegal entrapment of the defendants.

To fit into the radical milieu, Giannotti and Reagan, both unmarried, lived in virtual poverty. The agents had no regular employment in their undercover lives, but survived on income from odd jobs and the assistance of friends. One agent lived for a time in a dwelling described as "rat-infested."

Concerned that the security-conscious radicals they were watching might follow them, the two agents never set foot in an FBI



**JUDITH EMILY BISSELL**  
**L.A. arrest November 19**

office during their years underground.

Instead, clandestine meetings were set up in public places to pass along their written reports and meet with their superiors.

To carry off their undercover roles, the two bearded agents immersed themselves in the literature of communism, revolution and terrorism, not to mention feminism, homosexuality and the problems of third world and black cultures which also were central to the radical cause.

In their reports, the agents described the four Los Angeles-based suspects as dedicated students of revolution who held study sessions for as long as four hours straight, analyzing the writings of Mao Tse-tung, Karl Marx and Lenin line by line.

The lives and travels of the five defendants resemble a mosaic of which numerous key pieces remain missing.

Like many radicals of the 1960s, Judith Bissell had come from an upper income East Coast family whose lifestyle she rejected, at least in part because of disenchantment over United States conduct in Vietnam.

She obtained a degree in fine arts from the University of Pennsylvania in 1967 and studied art for a year in Paris. In 1968, Bissell and her husband, Silas, an award-winning poet and university professor, moved to Seattle.

In November, 1969, she was arrested and later convicted of

hindering a police officer in a clash between police and the Students for a Democratic Society at a picketed plant in Seattle.

On Jan. 18, 1970, she was arrested along with her husband for allegedly placing a gasoline bomb under the steps of the Air Force ROTC building at the University of Washington. But the couple failed to appear for trial and disappeared.

Silas Bissell, who is a descendant of the family which founded a carpet cleaner company of the same name, is still a fugitive.

It is not known when, but the Bissells broke up and Mrs. Bissell, along with Marc Curtis Perry, 29, moved into a \$180-a-month two-bedroom apartment in the Echo Park area of Los Angeles in early May.

They used an assumed name and the manager of the 14-unit apartment complex recalls that Bissell said she did domestic work and her husband was a professor.

In fact, Bissell, under yet another assumed name, is known to have worked part-time for Quality Care Nursing Service in Los Angeles and before that in San Francisco as a nurse's aide. Perry is believed to have worked part-time for a Hollywood photo developing firm.

Unbeknownst to the pair, they were under almost 24-hour surveillance by FBI agents, one of whom moved in to the apartment immediately adjacent to theirs.

Perry and Bissell are believed to have met in Seattle where Perry was a prelaw student at the University of Washington.

Like Bissell, he came from a family far removed from radical politics.

Ragra Perry, his mother, recalled in an interview that her then-teenage son, along with a group of other outstanding students in the Seattle area, in 1964 had dinner with Senator Barry Goldwater, who was then campaigning for the presidency.

He was a typical teenager then, she said, working at part-time jobs, attending high school football games and not overly interested in politics, although he participated in the Goldwater campaign.

In 1966 he registered for the draft and went off to college, where he joined a fraternity and began to prepare for a career as a

lawyer. "When he got into college he just turned, I don't know why," Mrs. Perry said. "He just got in with that radical group."

Eight years ago Perry dropped from sight, she continued, and the family has never heard from him since.

After leaving the Seattle area, Perry was arrested in October, 1969, in Chicago on charges of aggravated assault and resisting arrest in connection with a Weatherman rally that erupted into rioting and window breaking in that city.

He was indicted in 1971 by a federal grand jury for failing to report for induction into the Army, although those charges were dismissed earlier this year as a part of President Carter's amnesty program.

At his arraignment in Los Angeles federal court, Perry told a magistrate he once had been married and was the father of two children, although he had lost contact with them years ago.

To their Echo Park neighbors, Perry and Bissell were quiet people who kept to themselves and were cordial in small talk.

Just about two blocks west of Perry's apartment, Thomas Justesen, 27, lived with a still unidentified woman in her late 20s or early 30s known to her radical friends only as Esther.

The two, using assumed names, lived in a 50-year-old three-room home built behind another house overlooking a ravine and Echo Park boulevard. They had moved into the \$135-a-month unfurnished home in May, the same month during which Bissell and Perry moved into their apartment.

The neighborhood, one of the oldest in Los Angeles, is ethnically mixed and consists of many long-time residents living in stately, well-kept residences as well as some rundown apartments and older homes occupied by students and lower income families.

Landlord Henry Gillon Sr., who lives a few doors away, recalled that Justesen claimed to work for the federal government, doing research on transportation in Los Angeles.

Esther, it is believed, did not work on a full-time basis, although she reportedly attempted to find work as a seamstress and may have once worked in a local print shop.

Justesen held a full-time job as a \$200-a-week pressman at a lithog-

raphy firm.

His employer, Howard Watkins, said Justesen never talked much about his life.

"He did very good work and was a nice, quiet, responsible person," Watkins said.

Justesen attended high school in Seattle and the University of Washington in 1968-1969.

Like Perry, he was a college dropout who got involved in the Students for a Democratic Society. He was one of eight persons charged in 1970 with conspiracy to destroy government property stemming from a protest at the Federal Building in Seattle.

Justesen fled, but charges against all eight were dropped by the government in 1974.

Since authorities have yet to establish Esther's identity, nothing is known about her except that a few years ago she was arrested under another name in San Francisco by postal authorities on a charge of receiving false identification. That charge was dropped.

Like the other three known defendants, Clayton Van Lydegraf has extensive political roots in the Seattle area. He has no known record of convictions.

During the last 30 years the former printer has been a leader in leftist causes — periodically vanishing underground.

In 1969, he gained attention at the Students for a Democratic Society convention and became an unofficial advisor and theorist to the group.

In April, 1971, some of his papers were found in what the FBI alleged to be a Weatherman "bomb factory" raided in San Francisco, FBI documents report. The fingerprints of Justesen were also said to be found at the scene, but neither man was charged with any criminal offense.

Then in 1974, according to FBI reports, Van Lydegraf purchased the paper used to publish Prairie Fire, a political statement in support of the Weathermen philosophy.

Affidavits by the two undercover agents in the case state that Van Lydegraf claims to be the leader of the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee. He has openly written position papers for the group.