

# Of Golf Carts and SUVs...

Earth First! Journal

November 2003

On September 12, peace activist Josh Connole and his girlfriend, Katie McMillan, left the Regenerative Cooperative in Pomona, California, and drove in an electric golf cart to go rent a movie. At once, Connole noticed a black Ford Mustang following them. Believing he was being targeted because he was an organizer of recent anti-war protests, Connole dialed 9-1-1 and drove in circles as he awaited the police. Suddenly, he and McMillan saw four additional Black Mustangs.

Pushing the golf cart to its maximum speed of 25 miles per hour, Connole high-tailed it to the police station. When he arrived, a police officer put Connole in a head-lock and told him that federal agents were in the cars following him and that he should go home. So Connole left, and 20 minutes later, an FBI agent stood in his doorway with a gun pointed at him and placed Connole under arrest. Connole was booked at the West Covina Police Department for investigation of felony arson and vandalism.

During the course of events, an FBI agent told Connole that he was believed to be one of the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) members caught on a surveillance videotape during the August 22 SUV arson in West Covina (see *EF!J* September-October 2003). Secure in his innocence, Connole cooperated with the FBI—until an agent called him “a fucking liar. He warned me not to fuck with him.” At which point, Connole refused to cooperate.

While Connole was in custody, the FBI laid siege on the Regenerative Cooperative. It sealed the area off and prevented the cooperative members from leaving unless they consented to body searches. Plainclothes agents surveyed the house and searched visitors.

More than 50 investigators, complete with a mobile forensics lab, scoured the house for seven hours until they finally departed with two SUVs full of property. “I asked one of the officers how the search was going to work,” said a resident. “He said, ‘The FBI isn’t going to come in and take all your things and trash your room,’ but that’s exactly what they did.” Among the belongings confiscated were several computers, an anarchy patch, a 22-ounce bottle of fuel, hair brushes, bed sheets and a pair of women’s underwear.

During the FBI’s interrogation, agents showed Connole the surveillance tape from the SUV dealership. Connole pointed out that the image held no likeness to him: “It’s obviously not me.”

“They had a profile, and they were trying to make Josh fit it. They were trying to make a square peg fit into a round hole,” said Connole’s lawyer. At the conclusion of the 48-hour period that a suspect can be detained without being charged, the FBI was forced to admit that it lacked evidence and released Connole.

“The FBI was doing everything it could to intimidate me and make me confess to something I didn’t do,” said Connole. “The only thing I’ve done is stand on a corner with a sign, and as far as I know, that’s free speech.”

For personal accounts of the raid and information on how to support Connole, contact the Regenerative Cooperative, (909) 469-5100; [www.regen.org](http://www.regen.org).

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Earth First! Journal, vol. 24, no. 1 (edited by Rod, Samantha, Sprig, Tinder, and  
Turtle). Republished by the Environment & Society Portal.

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