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WEST

Activist who aided firebombings sentenced to 5 years

Rebecca Rubin also was ordered to pay more than \$13 million and read two books

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The Associated Press

PUBLISHED: 12:00 A.M., JAN. 28

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PORTLAND — One by one, members of the 1990s radical environmentalist movement dropped out of sight. By indictment or forcing them underground, federal prosecutors dissolved “The Family,” the loose-knit group of animal-rights activists and environmentalists blamed for fires at a ski resort, lumber mills and wild-horse corrals.

Two former members are still at large, and 10 people pleaded guilty in 2007 to conspiracy and arson charges. Among those 10 were some who gave up information on their fellow activists.

But Rebecca Rubin, sentenced Monday to five years in prison, refused to talk to prosecutors about her co-conspirators. Her silence has earned her a measure of celebrity in the animal-rights and anarchist movements, her attorney said.

Prosecutors say that silence, and the ensuing celebrity, are part of the reason Rubin merited a longer sentence.

“The people testifying agreed to name names,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Peifer said. “These individuals have stuck their necks out.”

Rubin’s attorney argues that she doesn’t want public attention.

After declining interview requests and directing her family to do the same, the public at last heard from Rubin on Monday in federal court in Portland. In a trembling voice, she read from a statement that acknowledged the damage wrought by multiple arsons while asserting that she would continue to fight for the rights of animals and the preservation of the environment.

“I was so convinced of the righteousness of my beliefs that I ignored the shortcomings of my own actions,” Rubin said.

The five-year sentence she received was the lowest allowable by federal sentencing guidelines.

U.S. District Court Judge Ann Aiken said Monday that Rubin showed contrition and lived in “an emotional prison cell” during seven years as a fugitive in Canada, from December 2005 to November 2012.

Aiken said she understood Rubin’s desire to see a change in how animals and the environment are treated, but she said Rubin’s actions, which included contributing to several arsons, did serious damage.

“That kind of damage is not how democracy works or how true change is accomplished,” Aiken said.

Rubin’s mother drove her from Vancouver, British Columbia, to the U.S. border at Blaine,

Wash., in November 2012, where her surrender to the FBI had been negotiated for her role with the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front.

Investigators blame the groups for 20 fires across the West from 1996 to 2001 that did \$40 million in damage. They burned a ski resort in Colorado, wild horse corrals in Oregon and Northern California, and lumber mills and Forest Service offices in Oregon. There were no injuries, and no one died.

She was ordered to pay more than \$13 million in restitution upon her release and perform 200 hours of community service. Rubin is a Canadian citizen. Her sentence will not be carried out until she is naturalized in the United States, which Aiken said she expects soon.

Aiken included in her sentence an order to read two books: “David and Goliath,” by Malcolm Gladwell, which Aiken said Rubin could learn nonviolent means to protesting systems she perceives as unjust; and “Nature’s Trust,” by University of Oregon environmental law professor Mary C. Wood.

At issue to government prosecutors, who sought a 90-month sentence, was the nature of Rubin’s role in plotting and executing the arsons and the celebrity status they say she has achieved among anarchists for refusing to talk to investigators about the two people still at large.

Rubin’s attorney, Richard Troberman, said Monday that Rubin didn’t seek any of the fame associated with her flight from justice or ensuing silence, and that she would discourage anyone else from taking similar actions.

“Rebecca is not a hero,” Troberman said, “and she does not see herself as a hero.”

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