

Page 26 Section A ☆☆☆ February 16, 1969
S. F. Sunday Examiner & Chronicle

Peninsula's Bomb Jitters May Be Ending

By Harold V. Streeter

A nightmare of fear, built up by crude lead pipe and gun powder bombs tossed at all hours of the night, may be ending for the 90,000 residents of Palo Alto and Menlo Park.

But the mushrooming cases of jitters rose to unbelievable heights in recent months—before police announced yesterday that nine arrests may have cracked the reign of terror.

"If a car backfires in Palo Alto now," a desk policeman said after the latest bombing, "as many as 30 people call headquarters."

Growing numbers of Palo Alto's 60,000 and Menlo Park's more than 30,000 are disturbed, some shocked and frightened. There's an edginess abroad.

"Just the other night," confided Leonard Cornell, a prominent Palo Alto real estate man, "when I heard a loud noise, that's the first thing I thought of. I hurried out to see if anything had happened to my neighbor."

LIVING IN FEAR

"There are a lot of our people living in fear," conceded Palo Alto Police Capt. Guy O. Wathen.

"They're afraid someone will toss a bomb through a window. Every time there's an explosion, we get appeals for special police protection. There are 98 police for 60,000 people. Our force can be spread only just so thin."

Until late last fall, the citizens of Palo Alto read about bombings in San Francisco and in San Jose and felt "it can't happen here." Living within the shadow of Stanford University, they were accustomed to settling differences by a rule of reason.

THE FIRST BOMB

Then it happened. Crude

bombs, many made out of easily-obtained lead pipe stuffed with gunpowder, began going off.

There was no set pattern. Groups active against the Vietnamese War have been a prime target. So have participants in the highly unorthodox Mid Peninsula Free Uni-

versity which holds classes in homes on sex, non-violence, self-fulfillment, worldwide politics and a host of other subjects.

"These are educated people who are getting bombed," pointed out Captain Wathen, "not bums."

Twice since Dec. 1, lead pipe bombs have blasted the gray frame house at 424 Lytton Ave., only a short distance from Palo Alto police headquarters. The house is the office of Concerned Citizens for Peace and The Resistance.

"Support our soldiers, bring them home," reads a poster out front.

On successive December days, a bomb blew out windows of the Free University's store at 1061 El Camino Real in Menlo Park and windows were smashed two blocks away at the bookstore of Roy Kepler. He teaches a course in non-violence at the Free University.

A restaurant frequented by the Free University's avante-garde crowd also was bombed.

"So far nobody has been killed," said Captain Wathen, "but if this doesn't stop somebody will be and then it will be murder."

On Jan. 26, a bomber apparently had murder in mind. At 4 a.m. the doorbell rang at 365 Coleridge Ave., the home of Palo Alto Councilman Kirke Comstock. Then a bomb blew the door in. But Comstock, who is planning to teach a course on city government at the Free University, was in Watsonville with his wife and children.