



# THEM

## and other goblins

by jay thorwaldson



(Editor's note: Jay Thorwaldson has covered the MFU for the Palo Alto Times throughout the Lytton Plaza and bombing episodes. His efforts have been fair although their treatment by the Times hasn't. Thorwaldson recorded his own thoughts in the February 13 Times, from which this column is cribbed.)

"They" are here in Palo Alto. What that statement means will depend solely upon the reader, and the extent of his paranoid feelings this week.

For "They" is the best paranoia word going. It stands for some group of usually nameless, faceless "Thems" who constitute some type of real or imagined threat to "us," that comfortable little group we all like.

And "They" is turning up more and more frequently in Palo Alto conversations, and even some beyond the city borders.

In some circles, it stands for the mad, bad bombers peppering homes and buildings with crudely made bombs and doing a great deal to create an areawide climate of neck-creeping fear and mistrust. "Who are they, anyway? Are they after me?"

Or it could stand for the Midpeninsula Free University (MFU), a loosely structured, left-oriented clustering of "classes" in everything from candle-making to revolutionary theory and practice. The MFU led a series of confrontations in downtown Palo Alto last fall--which it later officially withdrew from--that led many residents to the belief that, "They are stealing our children."

**I**n MFU conversations, "They" refers to an Establishment that is bent on destroying just about everything of human relevance on the face of the earth, in favor of a glassed in, walled up, smogged over, money-grubbing world of technological-

military-industrial progress.

In school-oriented circles, it can refer alternately to "those people" from across Bayshore Freeway who are seen as moving too fast, seeking too much at the wrong time, or to those who would, in blind bigotry, deny other humans their rights to seek adequate education, housing and jobs.

To some persons in the community, it means those who would build high-rise structures--hospitals or otherwise--and freeways across town in place of parks, pathways and playgrounds.

Or it could mean those who would stifle community growth and economic balance that has been carefully nurtured through the years to provide citizen amenities (such as parks and tree-lined streets).

It could mean the personnel in the business end of Stanford University, or the student activists that capture headlines in the education end. It could mean teen-agers, or adults over 30. Or police, or hippies.

It could mean antiwar groups, or hawks, doves, chickens and other fowl labels.

**W**hatever it does mean, in any context, the word has created one of the deepest crises in the memory of many long-time Palo Altans. It is deep and painful because it is a crisis of trust, that fragile fabric of human interaction without which a "community" is just so many people, wedged together.

The crisis is recognized as part of a broader national, even international, problem. But that doesn't answer the local question of what to do about the increased polarization between the many "theys" in town.

A community paranometer--for gauging paranoia levels --might help. Even better might be a resolve not to let "Them" get between friends.

*this place*  
*This place*  
 is **CONDEMNED.** the men have  
 have put their mark upon it. Soon comes the  
 of the yellow monster  
 steel jaws, rubber feet scraping, rolling over  
 rolling over  
 my sweet friend  
 mmm. la terre.

### poem

The Print Shop needs a little dough  
 Cully says the cost is low  
 Duane's morose  
 Vic's verbose  
 And Fred's got glottal eggs to throw.

Every meeting's just the same  
 No one knows the other's name  
 All we do  
 Is suffer through  
 Duane would know if he ever came.

Though we're all for marijuana  
 You can't smoke it where you wanna  
 If you're wired  
 Then you're fired  
 If Cullenbine should come upon ya.

**by larry tesler who else?**