

## THE DAY THE HOUSE BLEW UP

By Dennis Knight

I learned only Friday of Monday's assignment to write on the topic of insects. Bugged with the short time line, I remembered something I wrote a couple of years ago. I promise this piece is on topic, and I'll point out the qualifier when I come to it, eventually.

I grew up in an Irish Catholic family of seven children west of the tracks in Laramie and on the bank of the Laramie River. The floor plan of our house was a circuit, and a walk from room to room would soon return you to where you started.

When I was nine or ten, my parents undertook a remodeling to accommodate our burgeoning family. A new electric water heater was installed. It was a big one, large enough to support a family of nine. Adequate and modern as it may have been, Dad soon had buyer's remorse. He knew it was consuming rivers of electricity. He checked the meter daily, sometimes more, and extrapolated forecasts of huge bills. But even more than financial catastrophe, Dad was sure the damn thing was bound to explode.

Mom must have been on an errand that summer afternoon because, if she had been home, things would have been calmer. We were active kids and so it was unusual that we all happened to be indoors when Dad heard the first, foreboding hiss.

“Good God Almighty! Kids, she's blowing up! Get out of here! Get out of here now!”

The hissing grew by the second, Dad got louder, and we all joined the cacophony, jumping around, yelling to and at no one in particular. We forgot where the doors were. We ran the course of our house, colliding with furniture, doors and each other, through the hallway, through the front bedroom, through the living room, right past the front door, through the dining room, through the kitchen, past the back door, back into the hall and around again, each of us seeking escape from the doom, the hissing, and dad's frantic exhortations to save ourselves.

We were still captive and in turmoil as the roar returned to a loud hiss and then to a whisper, trailing down the alley and up the next block along the Laramie River. Now here is where the promised insect connection comes in. The roar that nearly leveled 718 Spruce was merely the county, spraying for mosquitoes.