

We Did Have a Key. Someplace.

*By Dennis Payton Knight*

When I grew up on Spruce Street in Laramie in the nineteen-forties and fifties, we had an old-fashioned lock on our front door, and someplace around the house there was a skeleton key that would operate it. I know we did, because I saw it many times. I played with it myself, and I might even have been the one who lost it. But, in fact, it was never, ever lost, simply because it was never, ever needed.

I don't know if the Knight household was unique around our neighborhood in that regard, but I suspect we weren't. Cars were seldom locked then, either, and the keys were usually left hanging in the ignition with the vehicle parked in the driveway. It was the logical place to keep them.

It may have been foolish for a family of nine to live without the security of locked doors, but our parents never sensed a risk, and they never felt their children were at risk, either. That was some six decades in the past, or if you measure progress a different way, maybe three generations ago.

It was an innocent time, to be sure, but, in pondering the memory, I don't know what kind of startling insecurity complex we would have been given if one day Mom and Dad up and decided they needed to find that old iron skeleton key. And the very thought of that, my friends, explains and concludes my essay.

Enough said.