

## Things that Creak in the Night

*by Marilyn Reeves*

When I was eight years old we moved to the big old house on F Street in Salida just a week before my little sister Rosie was born. The house boasted a wide front porch, large rooms, and hot water heat provided by an old coal furnace and those corrugated-type radiators that stood about three feet high by three feet long.

Mom and Dad had the front bedroom and my older sister Janet and I shared the one off the kitchen. We had separate twin beds. Hers was next to the kitchen wall and mine was next to the windows.

The very first night spent in any new house is always a bit creepy for a new resident, but when the 'new' house is more than 50 years old, you can spell Creepy with a capital C! We had just gotten snuggled into our nice new beds when suddenly we heard a bang. Followed by a bang, bang, bang! Since Jan was closest to the light switch she got up and turned on the light, but it didn't do a whole lot to alleviate our terror. Then she finally figured out that it was the kitchen register coming on. Why it made such a god-awful banging noise I never did understand, but at least we knew where the sound was coming from so she turned off the light and got back into bed. But then things went from bad to worse. The radiator quit banging but now I heard the sound of floorboards creaking. Someone was definitely approaching my bed. This time I didn't hesitate – I let out a blood-curdling scream!

It took about ten seconds for our dad to cover the distance between their bedroom and ours, trying to determine what all the ruckus was about. Once he had dried my tears and listened to my explanation, he sort of chuckled and said, 'That's just the sound of the floorboards heating up. They creak a little when the temperature changes.'

Fast forward about 65 years. I am standing in the walk-in closet off the master bedroom in my condo here at Windsor Gardens, when all the sudden the wicker basket where I keep my discarded clothing intended for Good Will started creaking. Since I hadn't touched the basket nor the shelf it sits on, it gave me a chill. I hurriedly grabbed my clothes and boogied on out of there. And the next time I walked into the closet the same thing happened. It was giving me the creeps, and for a couple of weeks I got to where I was afraid to go into my own closet. Then one day I decided, this is ridiculous! And I said aloud, 'Whoever's in there I'm not afraid of you. This is *my* closet not yours. I am reclaiming my closet!'

I continued to repeat that litany every time I went in there for the next several days, and it did the trick. I stopped being afraid of my closet, and that wicker basket hasn't made a creaking sound since.

I can take the sound of radiators banging, thunder booming, and big dogs barking. It's those little creaky sounds that stand my hair on end. But then, the only thing that really scares me is my own imagination. I'm still working on that.