There was a time when I knew everyone in my neighborhood for at least a two-block radius. I knew the parents, the kids and even the family pets.

I spent hours at the Schabbing house across the street, playing kickball, tag, hide ‘n’ seek and of course with dolls. They, in turn, spent many hours in my toy room,
We also spent an inordinate amount of time behind the laundromat playing in the milk crates. I can’t explain the appeal they had now but we spent hours rearranging them and making “rooms” and hideaways.
It was not uncommon for people to sit out on their front porch after supper and just visit. Casseroles were delivered to sick or grieving families. Children were swapped for a special evening out or just to give a harried parent a break.
Now you have to pass a 100-question test, a background check and more before anyone will leave their children with you. And then maybe not.
I still spend time on the porch and in the yard watering, weeding and just puttering around but it’s just not the same. I get a wave and a hello from the young girls who walk past my house every day but they don’t have time to chat or they don’t want to chat with an “old lady.”
When I walk Ringo, the Hammonds are often on their porch and we chat once or twice a week. He gets more attention than I do but I’ve come to terms with it. No one is going to come running down the sidewalk calling my name.
There are still neighborhood children but not nearly as many. We had the Carder boys, the Metcalfes, the Schabbings, the Hammonds, the Trustees, the Rodes and on and on. We had our own little pack and we would play neighborhood games of kickball in the summer and hockey on the frozen canal in the winter.
How different things are now. The garages are locked — even when people are home — and children no longer play outside like we used to. They are hunched over computer screens, feverishly playing video games or have other scheduled activities.
I have made it a point to get to know the “new” neighbors. It’s part of keeping our neighborhood a good place to live. If you know your neighbors, then you know who doesn’t belong.
With the rash of car break-ins, items stolen from yards and porches, etc., it’s more important than ever to know who’s supposed to be where.
If you have noticed, there were several police reports in the last two weeks where a break-in attempt was thwarted either by the homeowner or a neighbor. Awesome. Keep it up. Watch my back (door) and I’ll watch yours.