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An open letter to the Sport Lock-Picking Community

Throughout time, people have had a fascination with locks. Locks provide a means of protecting property, so the key to a lock confers an elite status to the person possessing it. Children eagerly await the coming of age when they are allowed to carry a key to their parents' home. As people grow up, they derive satisfaction from having the authority to control the decision about who will have a key to their own property. A lock and its key are powerful symbols of ownership as well as trust.

As architectural details, locks are significant in the design of a building. Architects carefully select the style and finishes of the locks for their buildings to reflect a distinct artistic purpose. Collectors of locks admire the wide variety of designs of lock handles, trim plates, padlocks, cylinders, and keys. Antique, as well as modern locks are studied, cataloged, traded, photographed, exhibited, and purchased by people all over the world.

Locks are also unique mechanical puzzles and the solution to the puzzle is their key. To most people, it appears to be impossible to open a lock without the correct key. Locksmiths are experts who are familiar with the internal mechanisms of locks and spend their time understanding the diverse methods used to generate these many different locking puzzles. With their knowledge of the internal cylinder mechanisms they offer a unique service to their community by evaluating threats and recommending solutions to secure property and protect lives of their customers. Many locksmiths enter the profession because they enjoy the thrill of knowing how to solve the puzzle without the key, but they remain in the industry because they find their customers value their unique knowledge and services. A locksmith who installs some dead bolts in a neighborhood where homes have been burglarized, knows that his work has provided additional safety to the family who lives there. At the end of the day he goes home with the respect and admiration of the community he has served. A locksmith never forgets the gratitude expressed by a woman who has sought help to lock an abusive boyfriend out of her apartment. A lock gives her the ability to resume her life without fear of attack. The new puzzle on her door is more complicated than the boyfriend can decipher.

Lock picking or manipulating the mechanical puzzle of the lock has been of interest to many people, for a long time. Perhaps the most famous of lock pickers is Albert Hobbs, an American, who attended the Great Exhibition in England, in 1851. At this exhibition, Hobbs was able to pick the "unpickable" Chubb Six Lever Detector Lock, in 25 minutes. Then, he undertook a challenge to open the Bramah Lock within 30 days. For 16 days, Hobbs worked under supervision and was able to open the cylinder without damage and the original key still worked. To this day, Hobbs is credited with developing a technique for lock picking that is identified as the "Hobbs' method". To their credit, the lock manufacturers in England learned from Hobbs techniques and made incremental improvements to their products.