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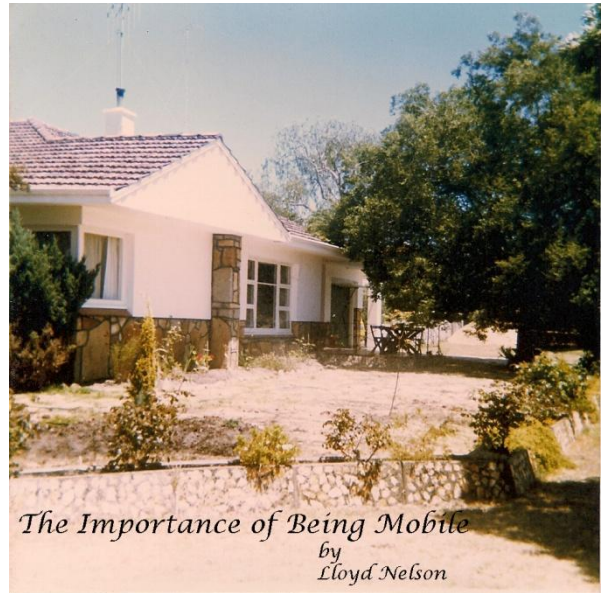
ryant Treemayne is not long retired from business. After 52 years of continuous application to making a dollar, he gets a good offer straight out of the blue and thus sells out. Tying up the loose ends takes a bit longer than he thinks and when this is under control, he starts to do some time absorbing jobs around his big white house. Not that it's at all run down, it's just that being so busy at work and with weekend sport and going to the City for concerts and to the south coast to swim, he can't fit in doing everything, so a bit has been held over until more time is available. He now has time and is quite enjoying not having the all absorbing side of running a busy business six and in busy times, seven days a week. While he doesn't think being in business has worried him, he is now sleeping like a top from when he puts his head down until the sunshine in his bedroom east window wakes him up.

First up, he and his wife, Marjorie, take a trailer out to a friend's farm and bring back sheep manure from under the shearing shed gratings and cow manure from the free ranging Murray Grey cattle that browse around the property. He digs a mixture of this into Marjorie's borders and rose beds and he puts a lot of this into sawn off chemical drums and tops these up from the tap. This gives him stacks of liquid manure to do the plants with and his petunias are now show pieces and his grape vines keep throwing out long waving runners. He follows up with plenty of white acrylic paint on his gutters and high gables and barge boards of the house. He doesn't ever bother putting on finishing coats of paint. Just paints them with undercoat, several coats, and leaves it at that. The house, the sign says 'Burdekin House', is very, very white and eye-catching.

This Tuesday morning, he has a few phone calls on the go and is working inside the house to attend to these as they ring in and in between, he is giving his old Japanese skeet gun a good clean up and birthday in readiness for a big clay target shoot on the weekend coming. With these activities going on here and there, his wife gets a bit shirty. It seems to him that she was much more amicable when they were both running their business. However, it's early days yet. It may get worse before it gets better. She is a bit mouthy today and to get her out of his ear, he gets a long ladder and props it up against the front gutter of the garage roof, puts on some sunscreen and a wide hat and picks up his mobile phone. They both have one of these things, though they are not very mobile phone orientated.

"Here you go again," Marjorie says, "getting away from me again, taking your blasted mobile phone with you. Nobody really needs a mobile phone and getting down from the roof and up again to answer calls on the fixed line would be very good for you. You are putting on a bit of weight you know."

Bryant has lost a stone (in the old measurements) since he retired, so he knows that this is only one of Marjorie's irritating throw away lines. She's off; in any case, to a garden club meeting at a good gardener's home a few doors down the side street. She huffs, steps over the low garden fence and carrying a few tools, is off.



The Importance of Being Mobile
by
Lloyd Nelson

“Don’t forget your mobile phone, love,” Bryant calls to her departing back.

He swings onto the ladder carrying a plastic tool box, open topped and with a handle, up onto the roof. The roof is of heavy Bristile tile. A couple have cracks in them and what he is doing concurrently is fixing this. He already has on the roof seven or eight unused tiles, which have stood around the garden beds since the house was tiled, about 45 years back. He is also using a couple of paint scrapers to clean off the moss and mildew that grows on this type of roof. He scrapes the tiles from the ridge down, straw brooms it into the gutters and later will scoop this all out with a very slim gutter cleaner.

With a break or two for a sandwich and a cuppa, and late afternoon to get a stubby out of the fridge, he works on the roof until nearly 4pm, when his 90 year old neighbour trundles out his waste bin to the street for tomorrow’s collection and then goes back for his recycling bin. Bryant sees all this from his lofty perch on his high roof. He is shielded a bit from sight by a vast Chinese Elm tree. However the locals, who miss nothing, spot his ladder and their eyes traverse, when driving by, up the ladder and thus they lamp Bryant working quietly away.

All of a sudden, things change. A nice looking, very white Volkswagon sedan, rolls to a stop opposite his neighbour’s place. Two young men, heavily built, wearing shorts and black tops, hop out carrying baseball bats. They smash the old neighbour to the ground and run past him to get into the house. Bryant gets his mobile out, photographs what is going on and debates whether to come down now to rescue his neighbour or to hang in on the roof and ring the rozzers. He’s doing this when a sudden gust of wind parts the leafy screen hiding him. The third member of the gang has been sitting quietly behind the wheel of the Volkswagon, with the diesel engine ticking over very steadily. As soon as he lamps Bryant on the roof, he leaps out of the car carrying an axe handle and leaving the car door swinging open, sprints across the road, mounts the long aluminium ladder and is (probably) aiming at getting hold of Bryant’s incriminating mobile phone - a Telstra job with an inbuilt camera.

Bryant is just near the top of the ladder, having worked his way down from the ridge. He calmly picks up two large and heavy, unused Bristile tiles and the minute the chap is head level with the top of the ladder, he smashes him in the face with them. It’s pretty drastic and the chap pulls back on the ladder. The ladder reaches the length of the bit of rope tethering it and he falls like a stone to the terrace below. Bryant takes a couple more tiles, drops them on the miscreant’s head and reels in the ladder. He then swarms down it, rushes across the road and removes the keys from the car, tossing them over a nearby house fence. Axe handle behind his back, he walks up to where old Cedric is lying. He’s breathing strenuously and is still very alive, if insensible. He makes him comfortable and walks to the house.

One of the two bandits comes out hefting a sheet full of burgled stuff. Bryant walks quietly towards him and when near enough, gives a Hitler salute.

“Heil Hitler,” he says, slowing and confusing the bandit, who stops walking.

“Heil Hitler,” Bryant calls again and gives this chap a dreadful welt to his knee. This put painfully paid to number two, but now three appears and he’s not gullible. They have a vicious stick fight – number three’s baseball bat versus Bryant’s axe handle. It’s not easy going, but Bryant is lucky. A Police car screams, absolutely screams around the corner, pulls up with a lurch and a young rozzar jumps out toting a riot gun. He puts a shell over number three’s head and it’s all over bar the shouting.

Marjorie comes around the corner and she is with another garden club member. She surveys the scene of chaos and havoc.

“Bryant,” she says, looking at the bleeding man six feet from her lounge room door, “what the devil are you doing?” Bryant grins,

“Not now, Marge,” he says, “but when we get old Cedric in the ambulance, I will come and explain the advantages of and importance of always carrying your mobile.”