

A Moving Experience

By Randolph Smiles

It all started when my wife's friend decided to move from the house she was renting near ours. This lady had apparently been hoping to buy the property and had, rather rashly, spent a lot of money on the place before finding out that the owner in fact did not want to sell!

Among the improvements she had made were a fitted kitchen, new tiling throughout - including the not inconsiderable outside areas - and a complete repaint. Although I was fairly comfortable where we were my wife eventually persuaded me that this was too good an opportunity to pass up, and I reluctantly agreed to move.

The first thing to do, of course, was to notify my bank, the various pensions people, and relatives and friends back in the UK of my impending change of address. Oddly there wasn't a telephone at the new house, but my wife assured me that it was a simple matter to have our existing line transferred and so our telephone number would remain the same.

With a stack of previously paid bills, to prove that we were reliable customers, she set off for the telephone office, and I began on the notification letters. She was gone for some considerable time and I had just completed the last of about fifteen letters, telling people that our address would be changing but our telephone number would remain the same, when my wife returned with the news that our line could not be transferred after all and we would have to have a new number!

When I had finished cursing, she explained that the problem was that our phone was still in the name of a previous tenant of the property and to transfer the line would require his signature. This was impossible because the gentleman in question, we knew, had returned to England in ill health and had subsequently died. Our only option then, was to sell back our existing line and accept a new number.

"All right," I said wearily, "do you know what the new number is going to be?"

"Oh yes," my wife said proudly, "the girl in the office wrote it down for me," and she handed me a crumpled slip of paper.

Sighing, I turned back to my computer and patiently began altering all the letters I had just completed, while my wife diplomatically made herself scarce.

The following day I spent close to an hour in the queue at Naklua post office, getting

the letters sent off (there were seventy people in front of me when I took a queue number) and so I was not in the best of moods when I got home to be told that a man from the telephone company had been round.

"That was quick!" I said. "What did he want?"

My wife looked a trifle sheepish. "He told me that the number the girl gave me yesterday is not our new number at all. She's a trainee apparently and made a mistake."

"My God!" I groaned, banging my forehead with the heel of my palm. "Why did I ever agree to this move?"

With the telephone problems finally resolved, our moving day was set for a Sunday. My wife had told me that her son-in-law, who owns an air-conditioning business and employs a couple of men, did not work on Sundays and so would be carrying out the move for us. Great, I thought, with the new house only just around the corner everything should be completed in the day, and with a minimum of upheaval.

WRONG!! The son-in-law and his men had just arrived and started dismantling things, when he received a call on his mobile phone and had to dash off on an urgent job elsewhere. I looked around at the chaos they had left with some dismay.

"How long are they going to be gone?" I asked.

My wife shrugged. "I don't know," she admitted, "but not to worry, my daughters will help me to move some stuff while they're away."

"How are you going to manage that?" I queried gloomily. "Most of this stuff's heavy."

"They've left their sack barrow," came the cheerful reply, "you just go round to the new place and leave everything to us."

And so it was that I found myself in a shady spot under a large mango tree at the new house, watching in some amazement as the girls trundled back and forth with the two-wheeled trolley, lugging wardrobes and fridges which teetered dangerously as they negotiated the 'sleeping policeman' speed humps in the road. I felt a bit like the man depicted on the label of the Camp Coffee bottle (a gentleman in a pith helmet, in the

days of the British Empire, sitting outside his tent under a huge union jack, directing operations with a steaming cup of coffee at his elbow). The only difference with me was that the beverage was an ice-cold bottle of beer!

It was late in the afternoon before the son-in-law and his men returned, and by then it had become obvious that the move was going to take considerably longer than I had first thought. For a start we had discovered that my wife's friend, I can only suppose in a fit of pique at the owner over her thwarted attempt to buy the place, had removed most of the electrical points she had installed; even going to the extent of ripping out the cables which had run to them!

The moving then, dragged on an on as, in the weekdays that followed, we waited for the son-in-law to finish work and find the time to install our air-conditioner, move the larger items of furniture, and complete the electrical and plumbing jobs which needed doing. To retain my sanity amid the scenes of chaos at both houses, I busied myself with renovating a set of furniture which, although obviously meant for inside, had been left outdoors where the weather had done its stained and varnished wood no good at all. The set consisted of four large armchairs and a three-seat settee. It was made of a very heavy wood and had obviously been quite expensive when originally bought. I determined to rub it down, then stain and varnish it again.

To this end I went to Tesco and bought some sandpaper and a tin which was clearly labelled in English as teak wood stain, semi gloss finish. It was a largish tin and cost 285 baht. I rubbed down two of the armchairs and began to apply the stain, trying to ignore the drilling and banging which was going on all around me.

The first coat was something of a disappointment. The 'stain' hardly covered at all, and was of an unnatural orangey-brown hue. I consulted the side of the tin and saw that a minimum of two coats was recommended. My wife, passing by with our washing machine balanced precariously on the sack barrow, made an unwise comment about my handiwork not looking 'soo-ay' and I stalked off to get a beer to keep my temper in check.

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