

Privacy at all costs

Ruth Ostrow

A FEW years ago, when I was living in Sydney, a Jehovah's Witness duo came to the door. I picked up my hose and sprayed one of them. Yes I did, in the name of the good Lord.

It was a Sunday morning, the third Sunday in a row I had been woken prematurely by Bible bashers who like to prowl the streets of Bondi, preying on the party-sodden. I had already warned two sets off. The third, carrying a magazine appropriately called *Awake!*, got hit with the hose which I'd positioned near the door.

Years later, I think about that shocked, wet man in his clinging suit, and I ponder the ethics of my behaviour. Am I right to have protected my privacy in any way possible? Do I have a right to defend my front door, my sleep, and my private religious beliefs, from those who stalk me in a bid to impose their views?

I was contemplating this recently after a sweet old lady came to my door in Byron Bay while I was being interviewed on national radio and banged insistently on the door, causing me to abruptly end the interview. She was selling the "real" God. Again I was moved to share my thoughts on where she might put her zealot magazine.

I feel much the same about cold callers. Sure, we all need to make a buck, but my privacy is more important to me than your financial problems, buster, so don't invade my dinner, toilet or family time with your surveys and soap powders. Frankly, I'm disgusted by the intrusion. Nor am I impressed with the number of trees that are ruthlessly felled so you can cram coloured bits of unwanted rubbish into my mailbox.

I know there are Bible bashers, tele-sales workers and marketing people out there who are reading this and wanting a little sympathy. As comedian Jerry Seinfeld said, "Can I have your private home number so I can ring you back later?" No? Surprising, isn't it?

Marketers monitor us online; cameras watch us when we drive on the road. Heck, we can't even have a private tongue-kiss in a public lift any more with someone who doesn't belong to us lest we get caught on camera. There is nowhere safe to hide. So when I barricade myself inside my home – get it, guys! No junk mail, no cold calls, no door-knocking, no surveys, no kind acts of charity (I know how to contact the Red Cross).

Just go away. Or prepare for a tongue-lashing and hose-splashing.

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First published in *The Weekend Australian* SAT 22 APR 2006