

FEATURES ♣ II

Peace, love and bread



From hippies to multimillionaire bakers, Andrew Fraser tracks the rise and rise of the men behind Bakers Delight and Brumby's

THIRTY years ago today two young, idealistic hippies, who were members of a yoga cult, started baking bread at a small shop in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. The purpose of the bakery was to fund an alternative school at St Kilda on Melbourne's bayside run by the leader of the cult — India-born yoga teacher and guru Vijayadev Yogendra.

The bakery and the school proved a huge success, so much so that the two bakers of 1975, Roger Gillespie and Michael Sherlock, now head Australia's two largest independent bread chains — Bakers Delight and Brumby's.

Gillespie is the man behind the 600 Bakers Delight outlets. The wholly-owned private company has also expanded overseas into New Zealand and Canada, and has a turnover of about \$450 million. *Business Review Weekly* estimates that Gillespie and his wife Lesley, who own a 70 per cent stake, are worth just less than \$100 million.

The old alternative spirit of the '70s lives on in Sherlock and his Brumby's business. The company is listed on the Bendigo Stock Exchange. There are 300 stores and Sherlock owns about 10 per cent of the company, with his stake worth about \$2 million. Sherlock also owns eight Brumby's stores and esti-

turned his back on that because we were all into alternatives at the time," Sherlock says. "So we found an old butcher's shop, had a working bee, painted it and got some second-hand machinery and started a bakery. That's really how Roger and I started learning the basis of franchising — you can get people skilled up very quickly. The money from the bakery went to support the school, and we'd also run seminars and symposiums on world peace and this sort of thing."

Sherlock was also a teacher at the school but Gillespie — who claims to have started both Brumby's and Bakers Delight — had a far more hands-on role. The Ashburton shop was established as the Old Style Bread Centre, but other names mushroomed throughout the '70s, including the Bread Crop, the Bread Inn, Old Style Bakers Delight and the Colonial Bakehouse. The Cold War and the increasingly tense world situation in the early '80s, worried the cult. Colonel David Hackworth, America's most decorated living soldier, until he died earlier this year and said to be the role model for Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, had become disillusioned with military life and wanted out.

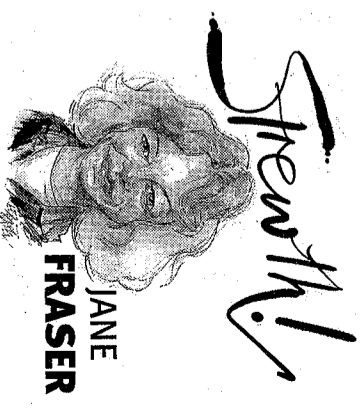
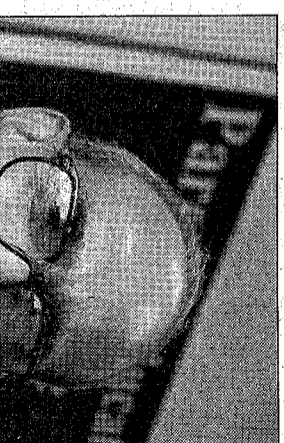
Before he left, he claimed to have cleaned out US military intelligence, which showed the safest place in the event of the coming



Making dough: Brumby's Michael Sherlock in a Brisbane outlet; the original bakery, top left



Main picture: David Sprouie



Locked down at BHP

BOB Carr isn't the only ex-minister to fall with his bum in the butter. Former minister for state development in Western Australia **Clive Morris Brown** did not contest the state elections this year, saying he was building a house instead. Now he's working for the world's biggest resources company, BHP Billiton, on matters directly related to his previous ministerial responsibilities. BHP has a number of key issues in play with Brown's successor, one-time television presenter **Alan Carpenter**. Sceptics say BHP Billiton may be benefiting from Brown's contacts with state cabinet and the state development department, particularly as there seems no place for the former minister's pre-parliamentary expertise. For many years Brown headed WA's prison officers' union.

Cape of lost hope

QUEENSLAND Premier **Peter Beattie** is flying to Hopevale Aboriginal community north of Cooktown, Cape York, on Monday, the home of **Noel Pearson** and famous rugby league full-back, **Matt Bowen**. The purpose of the visit is to open the police station, courthouse and residence. The first thing people see when they arrive at the settlement is the police station, surrounded by 3m-high fences topped with barbed wire. Locals shake their heads at the message this sends and they're disgusted that this million-dollar-plus project was completed by the state Government without one day's work for an indigenous person, despite the community having some 80 per cent unemployment. There are hundreds of able-bodied men and women on site who would have loved a pay cheque for real work.

Going down...

WHILE ALP leader **Kim Beazley** may be feeling a little shell-shocked after the Newspoll result showing his satisfaction level is back to near the record lows of 1996, things aren't exactly sunny for his predecessor. Buyers' enthusiasm for **Mark Latham's** book has waned faster than his popularity, with sales of his fiercely hyped and venom-filled memoir falling more than 70 per cent. In its second week in bookshops, *The Latham Diaries* slipped to fifth on the top 500 hit parade, selling just under 4000 copies. While that pushes the moody house-dad's \$39 hardback's total

Gillespie and Sherlock.

After spending most of the '70s in Melbourne together with the rest of the yoga cult they moved to Warwick, in south-east Queensland, where they opened a variety of businesses to support another school.

Both men left the cult — Gillespie in the early '80s, Sherlock in the late '80s — and returned to baking bread. These days Sherlock operates out of a small office in trendy Park Road in Brisbane's inner west, where he has a habit of answering questions by quoting the lyrics of rock songs.

Unlike Gillespie, who is based in Melbourne, he is forthcoming about his time in the '70s and '80s as a follower of Yogenndra, who died earlier this year in Port Douglas, Queensland.

It all began back in 1962, when Yogenndra met and married a Melbourne girl on the India hippie trail. The couple settled in Melbourne, where Yogenndra started several yoga centres.

The early '70s provided fertile ground for peddlers of eastern philosophies. It was the peak of the counter-culture. Young people opposed the Vietnam War and rejected the philosophies that underpinned it. Universities provided a natural recruiting ground for yoga teachers.

Gillespie was studying economics at the University of Melbourne while Sherlock was doing the same at Monash. Both joined the yoga society at their universities, both of which were run by Yogenndra who proved a charismatic guide to his willing middle-class pupils. Sherlock says the cult was top-heavy with schoolteachers and doctors.

"Think global, act local" was still 20 years away from being a bumper-bar sticker, but the cult took the slogan to heart. They set up a school in Chapel Street, St Kilda with high educational and social standards — one teacher for every five students, low fees and hot meals for students. To pursue their dream of raising a generation of children who were thoughtful, educated and well balanced, they needed a steady source of income.

Gillespie, whose family had been baking bread for generations and who had worked in a bakery on school and university holidays for 10 years, provided the answer.

"Roger knew how to do it all, but he'd

Yogenndra set up a property at Spicers Gap in the Border Ranges and the School of Total Education was transferred from Melbourne to Freestone Hill on the northern outskirts of Warwick. The school is still in existence and has been cited by former education minister David Kemp as the type that should be supported by government. It is also the only school in Australia with a nuclear fallout shelter.

Both Gillespie and Sherlock left Melbourne for Warwick because, as Sherlock says, it "was where the action was for all of us". "The idea was to set up a utopian society, with environmentally aware businesses, a good school you could send your kids to, living in a good environment."

Following the success of the bread shops in Melbourne, the first bread store with the name Brumby's opened in Warwick in 1982. They also set up other businesses — Medhert, which manufactures herbal extracts in liquid rather than tablet form, and EnvironData, which measures the quality of drinking water. Both were new-age businesses: measures such as quality assurance were introduced and both had impressive web sites at a time when the internet was still the preserve of academics.

But while business thrived, there was less growth on the spiritual side. Gillespie and his wife Lesley left the cult in the early '80s, heading back to Melbourne with the name Bakers Delight and a desire to build a business portfolio. Gillespie says he fell out with Yogenndra. "The guy turned out to be a liar and a cheat," he says.

Brumby's, meanwhile, was listed on the second board of the Melbourne Stock Exchange in '85. When the stockmarket crashed in '87, so too did the fortunes of the cult. "My pager went off when I was at the Brisbane Expo, saying the receivers were in here," Sherlock says. "Then all the guru's inner circle were corrupted by this bankruptcy, so I was brought in to rescue the whole thing."

For Sherlock, this was the beginning of the end. He rationalised the activities of the school, bumping up student/teacher ratios to 10 students for each teacher instead of five. An after-hours surgery in Toowoomba, which was supposed to be another cash cow for the cult, failed to deliver the money. Sherlock came to the same conclusion



'Black heart': Yoga guru Vijayadev Yogenndra

There's no personal animosity — we play phone tag with each other a fair bit — but we treat all of our competition seriously

Roger Gillespie

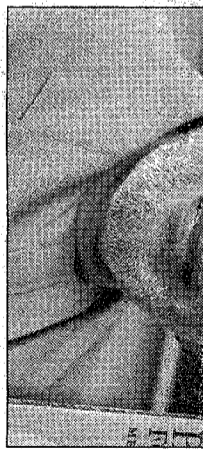
by's and Bakers Delight into franchise operations. Sherlock says he and Gillespie learned the basic principles of franchising when they had to open a lot of bakeries and get them running at a profit very quickly for the cult.

The two men remain competitive in business and maintain a personal but distant relationship. "We still get on, but we just don't see each other that much," Sherlock says.

Gillespie is still married to Lesley, but Sherlock's marriage failed to survive the cult, which broke up in the early '90s, changing the direction of his life. "I haven't seen Michael for a year," Gillespie says. "There's no personal animosity — we play phone tag with each other a fair bit — but we treat all of our competition seriously."

Despite wanting to focus on the now, Gillespie can't resist a dig at his old mate. "They [Brumby's] do tend to copy everything we do," he says. "They try to do all things to all people whereas we're bread specialists."

Sherlock remains nostalgic about his hippie days when he and Gillespie were trying to create world peace. "The other day I pulled out a book and there was a card from Roger on my birthday in 1981, when we were all living together in a house in St Kilda. It all seemed so much simpler back then."



'Black heart': Yoga guru Vijayadev Yogenndra

have initially maximised his market appeal rather than put him in for the long haul. He's run out of hot air.

Hallowed ground

STEVE BRACKS has had a vision: "Just imagine," he says, "the renovated Melbourne Cricket Ground, the Pope and 100,000 people lining the streets." He was speaking of his invitation to the Pope to visit Melbourne on his trip to Australia in 2008. The Victorian Premier says there is a "good chance" the Pope will drop in on Melbourne because the proposed visit has the backing of Cardinal George Pell. The Archbishop of Melbourne, Denis Hart, is naturally supportive. "It will be the first time in more than 20 years a pope has been to Melbourne. Of course to see the Pope celebrate mass at the Melbourne Cricket Ground would be an even more significant event for our state," he says. The invitation comes hot on the heels of the Pope's first book, *God's Revolution*, a compilation of his speeches which went on sale in Australia yesterday. So Melbourne will get pope-on-a-rope soap souvenirs too.

Poetic licence

FORMER Redgum singer and Adelaide songwriter John Schumann has just recorded an album, *Lawson*, setting some of poet Henry Lawson's best-known work, including *Faces in the Street* and *The Glass*.



Grave expectations: John Schuman

on the Bar to music. He enlisted a handful of folk balladeers — Shane Howard, Broderick Smith, Kerry Tolhurst — collectively known as the Vagabond Crew, to help. Former Midnight Oil drummer Rob Hirst also joined in. Schumann reckons the album is bound to upset a few Lawson purists. To gauge what Lawson would have thought he visited the legendary poet's grave at Waverley Cemetery in Sydney yesterday but couldn't tell if he was turning in it.

Mary's little lamb

THOSE swift-fingered Danish yarn-spinners have created more booties and shawls than any infant could wear ahead of the much-anticipated birth of Prince Frederick and Princess Mary's first child. The impending birth has also spawned a cottage industry at this end of the earth. A group of Hobart women has knitted a traditional layette including plishers — baby-codes for a matching outfit with waterproof nappy cover. The future prince or princess had better watch out for those anti-mulching animal rights activists because the cream outfit is made from Tassie-grown merino wool.

stewth@theaustralian.com.au

Same old sexploits and slander as gossip goes global

STEPHEN MATCHETT
THE WRKY SIDE



Many moved to provide what people would pay plenty for — pornography. But more mainstream merchants saw the wide world as an infinite electronic mall. And so in the first years of life online fortunes were made and lost, generally lost, by people selling everything imaginable from dalmatians to diddies.

Not that there was anything wrong with the idea, the e-entrepreneurs only added too many thoughts to their profit projections. And now, 10 years on, the iww has taken a settled shape. For some, it is an electronic bazaar.

Other people use it to pay the bills and chat on line with that nice Frau Deville from Dalmatia.

But because the internet is now part of our lives, we use it for the four things that make the world go round — boasting, bitching, retribution and revenge.

For boasting, it is hard to beat the fate of Claire Swire at the hands of her bozo of a bloke. Swire, a young lady of London, pioneered e-licious in 2000 by emailing her views on oral sex to her lawyer boyfriend. Who, enjoying being presented as an upright sort of chap, promptly mailed the message to his mates, just a couple, mind. Who mailed theirs, and so on and so on.

Within hours the whole world was watching their screens for advice on any of Swire's other hobbies. There may be people who did not read Claire's comments, just not on this planet.

For bitching, people prefer to use the winterwren when they could do it in person, perhaps because electronic abuse reduces the risk of being thumped. Like the two Sydney legal secretaries in July who started with slander over a sandwich and ended with duelling keyboards.

They were both sacked over the blue, presumably for not billing abuse time to a client. That the sort of online gossip lawyers love is driven by sex in London, but sandwitches in Sydney, says a great deal about the two towns, but you would need to search the iweb to work out what.

When it comes to malice, it is hard to ignore the fate of the Korean commuter who did not clean up when her dog defecated on a train. That it was the failure to scoop the poop, rather than the presence of a pooping pup that upset other passengers probably says more about public transport in South Korea than

Flour power: Bakers Delight's Roger Gillespie

about Yogenndra as Gillespie did, only several years later. "I saw how the whole foundation was working or not working," he says. "I thought it crashed because he had had advice. But then I found out he wasn't getting bad advice, it was just that he had a black heart. So that's when I fell out with him and I left."

But as part of the restructuring of the cult, several businesses were sold off. One of these was Brumby's. Two tenderers were consor-

Picture Richard Csar-Wright

tiums headed by Sherlock and Gillespie. "It was one of the few times we've been in direct competition with each other," says Sherlock, who won the tender.

Gillespie was well established in the business world by the early '90s. For Sherlock, leaving the cult was traumatic but he had little time to dwell on it as he had to rebuild his business career. Sherlock and Gillespie both turned Brum-

the tourism authorities would like us to know. The dog lover's inertia landed her deep in the doo-doo. Passengers took photos of her with their phones and posted them to a web site, www.commutertrap.net/kr (all right, I made the address up). Information on her poured in and before long she was better known than Claire Swire, but less in demand for dates. For revenge, there's www.don'tdelightgirl, an American site where aggrieved women can post photos and details of cheating men. This is cyberjustice at its best. No excuses or explanation, annoy a lady and up goes the portrait, supported by details of misdeeds. The people who invented email and the winterwren will be proud.

It just shows how everything and nothing has changed. The gossip may be global but the ending is still the same, tears for the victim and amusement for everybody else. All thanks to the netwib.