

# Spiritual turnaround

*"Cold Call" is a new fortnightly series based on the theory that everyone's got a story to tell. It works like this: we have a quick trawl through the phonebook, choose a listing and phone with a request for an interview. This week, Denise Irvine spotted a Hamilton listing for Spiritual Gardens, which led her to Michelle Nelley in Dinsdale.*

Michelle Nelley is remarkably unfazed and friendly about being interviewed: "Yes, that's fine," she says, and proceeds to give excellent directions to the Dinsdale home she shares with husband Trevor and their son James.

This is the headquarters for Spiritual Gardens, which turns out to be about things of the spirit rather than lush, mystical plantings of flowers and vegetables. Although a few big tubs of bulbs on the front verandah perhaps point to some colourful displays ahead in springtime.

**DENISE IRVINE**  
**COLD CALL**

Michelle Nelley, 37, is Hamilton-born and bred, and grew up not far from where she now lives in Dinsdale.

As a youngster she delivered the *Hamilton Press* newspaper around this area, and she can turn her hand to anything. "I'm an entrepreneur," she says.

"As a kid, if I wanted pocket money, I had to earn it."

She's encouraged this work ethic in her own children, challenging them to look outside the square when they need money for something. "I like to look at what can be done, not what can't be done. If it's important to you, you'll find a way to achieve it."

Michelle recalls picking blueberries to earn money, and she has stripped car engines for her father. In 1994 she ran a shop in the long-gone Collingwood Court complex selling crystals and plaster-of-Paris gnomes.

"The shop was called Gnome On In," she grins.

She's also been a produce manager at a supermarket, worked at Telecom's call centre, Livestock Improvement, and does child care.

Michelle and Trevor have a blended family, each with children from a previous relationship.

They've been together for about six or seven years, and had a wonderful wedding with a handfasting ceremony a year ago.

Now they've got baby James, eight-and-a-half months, and Michelle is developing a new career around spiritual matters, and the creation of Spiritual Gardens.

"It started as a hobby when I became involved with clairvoyants in late 2006," she says. "It's just grown from there."

To step back a bit, Michelle admits she'd never previously believed in the power of clairvoyants, readings and New Age philosophies: "I always said, 'I write my own path, no-one tells me my future.'"

But during a visit to Melbourne about four years ago, her clairvoyant friend Barbara Hayward insisted on doing a reading for her. "It blew me away," Michelle says, remembering the powerful effect it had on her. "She told me things no-one else knew."

Michelle was converted, she started searching for more information, and sharing what she found. Out of this grew Spiritual Gardens, which through a network of like-minded people offers clairvoyant readings, healings, various workshops, massage, and a Magenta Tarot Line for callers seeking a phone reading. Michelle manages the Tarot Line and makes referrals to clairvoyants and other providers.

Spiritual Gardens also runs a Natural Earth and Holistic Fair on the first Saturday of every month at the Glenview Community Hall (with 12-20 stallholders),



and takes these shows to other North Island centres as well.

They've now got a customer base of about 500 people, and a network of natural health and spiritual providers. Michelle says once upon a time people wouldn't talk about such matters, "but things are changing".

She jokes, though, that her brothers

think she's "a bit weird".

Michelle and Trevor have dreams of eventually building their own retreat, or running one for someone else. "We'd like to hold workshops, grow our own food, give the excess away, help other people, pass on knowledge and bring back some of the old principles of looking after each other."

Trevor is a clairvoyant and tarot reader, and Michelle's own skill is healing. She has learned this through practice, and by "letting go of fear and doing it anyway".

"We've all got the gifts, it's a matter of uncovering them," she says. "Your spiritual self doesn't show itself until you are at peace with yourself."

**New direction:** Michelle Nelley's turning a hobby into a growing business.  
Photo: KELLY HODEL

# Tired of being odd one out



Lucy Corry  
Classified Information

Bravery comes in many forms. Jewel is not quite brave enough to have her real name printed in the paper, but she has taken a huge leap of faith and placed her first-ever personal ad. It's a bold move for the mum of three, but she's sick of wasting time on losers and tired of being alone.

"This is either going to make me or break me," she admits. "If this doesn't work out, where do I go from here?" Jewel decided her personal advert would be as upfront and honest as she is. Short blokes, for example, need not apply. "Short guys do nothing for me. I think it's better to have that out there from the start."

Delusional timewasters don't do much for her either. She's wary after a recent blind date, where Prince Charming turned out to be a pot-bellied bunny boiler. "We had been text messaging for a couple of weeks and he told me he was a 46-year-old bodybuilder and an interior decorator. When he turned up, he looked more like 66, with a huge beer gut. I don't think he'd done any bodybuilding for 30 years and his old Toyota had overheated the whole way down from Auckland."

Jewel was tempted to pull the pin but she felt sorry for the guy and shouted him dinner. "I should have just given him \$20 and said 'thanks, but no thanks', but I was worried that he wouldn't make it home. I told him that I was sorry but nothing was going to happen between us, then I took him home and made up the spare room for him. A few people were shocked that I did that, but I can look after myself, and he told me he was a gentleman."

While nothing untoward happened, Jewel still felt a bit used when her hapless suitor asked her for some oil for his car the next morning after she'd cooked him a breakfast of bacon, eggs and homegrown tomatoes. The so-called gentleman added insult to injury a week or so later when he texted her a photo of his ex posing in a g-string. Jewel has calmed down about that now – though it's fair to say Mr Beer Gut isn't welcome at her place any time soon – and nervously optimistic about what her personal advert will bring. She's happy with her own company and has plenty of friends, not to mention family, but she's a little tired of being the odd one out. "Most of my friends are all in couples and you feel like piggy in the middle a lot of the time. It would be nice to meet someone, that's why I put friendship/relationship in the ad. It's not all about sex."

While Jewel tried to cram as much as she could into her advert, there was a lot she had to leave out. Her last relationship left her drained after she gave too much and got too little in return; now she just wants to meet a decent bloke to share some good times with. "I've got the body of an 18-year-old, I'm fit and energetic, I like gardening and walking and window shopping. I've got a full-time job and I'm really proud of that, because jobs are hard to come by these days. I cook good meals during the week but on Friday night I like to blob out on the couch and eat junk food. "I like to hold hands, and a lot of guys think that's a bit corny, that it went out with the Ark. But it's not much to ask, is it? So there you have it. Fit, gorgeous, green-eyed, green-thumb blonde wants tall, kind, considerate man to love, laugh and hold hands with. What are you waiting for?"

■ Classified Information is a fortnightly series in which *Times* writer Lucy Corry looks at the stories behind the small ads.

Everything we do is perfectly in line with Mr Bryant's wishes." In the early days of running the camp they had many visitors to the house, who had convalesced there. "People would come in and talk about Uncle Dan. We'd show them through, and show them the changes we'd made. They were happy that it was still the same kind of place. "Daniel Bryant would be so happy. What he started in 1920, today is bigger and more far reaching than anything he would have envisaged at that time." Raglan and District Museum secretary Steve Soanes says: "When the Children's Bible Crusade took over it there was this old shed that no-one had looked inside for years, and they decided to get in and clean it out one day. They found all this 1940s agricultural equipment in it and donated it to the museum, which is where our association with Bryant Home started. "I went up there about three years ago as part of a museum project, looking for historic buildings to protect for the future. "One of the buildings that we looked at was the old Bryant House, and I went up there and took a whole lot of photographs. I was astounded at the place, it's just beautiful." ■ From the Hamilton Central Library files. Contact Iris Riddell: irisriddell@ihug.co.nz

# Children's welfare top priority of trust's founder

**Published April 12, 1960**  
During the past few months a new humanitarian trust has been constituted and established in Hamilton. It is concerned with the children's convalescent home near Raglan, for so long known as Bryant House.

In the year 1924, Mr D V Bryant, CMG, conceived the idea of founding and maintaining a home in which convalescent children could be given a few weeks' holiday absolutely free of charge and under the supervision of a trained staff. Mr Bryant, accordingly, arranged for the acquisition of an area of approximately ninety acres on high land, overlooking the sea, some three miles from Raglan.

This purchase was financed by Mr Bryant. He then approached certain business and professional men who agreed to act as trustees, to hold the legal title to the land in question and to administer the contemplated home and the assets of the proposed trust. A board for this purpose was, accordingly, incorporated. Mr Bryant transferred the land to the Board of the Bryant House Trustees and proceeded to finance the erection of the beautiful home which has become so well-known to so many people.

In addition, Mr Bryant vested in his board various other properties and assets, in order properly to endow

## 50 YEARS AGO

Bryant House and to provide a fund for its maintenance. He also agreed to act as honorary-manager of the trust during his lifetime and to devote a large portion of his own income to the work of the institution and its business affairs.

The Deed of Trust, to effect the above purposes, was signed by Mr Bryant and the other original trustees on November 17, 1924. Three of the original signatories, viz, Messrs D V Bryant, R English and C L MacDiarmid, are still living and still members of the board.

After Bryant House had been occupied by numerous batches of children the board decided that, during the winter months, the home should be devoted to the accommodation of women needing a rest and change; convalescent children for the future were to be received and cared for during the remainder of each year.

During the war years, the trustees temporarily ceased to take children at Bryant House and made the home available – free of charge – to servicemen requiring recuperation and rest. A large number of these men availed themselves of this opportunity.

In 1953, owing to his ill-health, it became very difficult for Mr Bryant to give to the supervision of Bryant House



the time and attention he had for so long devoted. The trustees thereupon entered into negotiations with the Waikato Hospital Board and it was eventually arranged for the latter board to take over the administration of the home for a period of 10 years, during which time the home was to be financed by the Bryant House Trust Board.

The time has arrived, however, to make more permanent provision for the work hitherto carried out by the Bryant House Trust Board. Last year, with the consent and approval of his board, Mr

Bryant approached the local representatives of three churches suggesting that such churches should take over the assets work and functions of the board. Negotiations were carried on for some months in a very happy and cordial spirit and a new body formed to be known as the "D V Bryant Trust Board (administered by the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches)." The constitution of the new trust will provide the children, and possibly adults, shall be admitted to the Raglan home irrespective of creed and

that admission shall not be confined to those belonging to the three churches taking over the trust.

Thus ends an era in the life of an organisation which has done much for the community. It is hoped and believed that, under the new trust, the value of Bryant House will be still further enhanced and perpetuated.

**UPDATE:** Auckland's Jean Morley was part of the group which bought Bryant House in 1968.

"My husband and I were in our 20s, we worked alongside Charles and Beryl McRae, the founders of our organisation, the Children's Bible Crusade. Bryant House had closed down and was up for sale. When we bought it, we longed to know the man who founded the place, even though he'd gone, because it was so special."

The Children's Bible Ministries (CBM), as it is now known, continues Daniel Bryant's work today, but in a slightly different direction.

"Daniel Bryant had put into the trust deed that it could not be sold to anyone except another organisation or person who was working with children, it was just wonderful that he left it that way. We're using it for exactly the reason we bought it – to turn it into a children's camp where children from church or non-church homes, all denominations, are welcome in all the school holidays.

**Flashback:** Bryant House in Raglan in the 1960s.  
Photo: HAMILTON CITY LIBRARY