

ANNE CONNOLLY has ended her 40 day fast. The 21-year-old Dublin office worker was not on hunger strike nor trying to lose weight. She worked throughout the water fast, the fortieth day of which was last Wednesday. On Thursday morning she broke it with fruit. Anne had plenty of support in her effort for several of her friends were also on fasts or had recently completed them.

What's it all about? Yoga. Or to be precise, Tony Quinn's Yoga Commune where I met a group of people whose lives have been changed since they took their first Yoga classes, classes which I am satisfied are unlike the Yoga classes which hundreds of Irish people will enter during the next few weeks.

Tony Quinn claims his classes are different. Rival teachers are more than anxious to agree with him.

Last winter, Yoga had really started to catch on in Dublin. Then there was the newspaper stink about Tony and a young married woman who allegedly left her family to join the commune in Templeogue. The result was that people dropped out of Yoga classes all over the country.

Regular Yoga teachers were frustrated in their attempts to explain that Yoga is not Tony Quinn's Yoga. Nor did he come out of the scandal too well himself. He found that parish halls were no longer available for rent, his insurance on the rented St. Columban's monastery shot from £200 to £900 and the tax people were alerted.

BIG THINGS

With the gentle assurance of a beloved guru, Quinn surrounded by his 36 followers feels: "We are going to do big things this year, I don't mean money. We are going to achieve a lot." Part of that achievement is Anne Connolly's fast.

I spent quite a night at the commune. They are sincere and committed people. They all adore Tony and believe they are re-incarnated with him from past lives at the time of Christ.

The man who knows he was Joseph told me that I was a war correspondent in the First World War electrocuted at the age of 27 and buried at Dijon. "That accounts for your fear of electricity," he told me. True, I don't like electricity.

At five and a half stone, Anne had come down from 8 stone in May. Finished the fast she sounded as if she was on Cloud Nine.

She hadn't been to a doctor, she said, Tony knew all about fasting and diets. She placed her trust in him completely. How had she felt? About the twentieth day she had felt bad, like a very old person and often tired but Tony said Christ probably didn't feel well all the time on his 40 day fast. She was doing it, she explained, to unite with God, "not the God of religion but to the Energy that is the life force."

When she accomplishes this she feels she will be able to help people to be healthier and happier. Girls who suffer anorexia nervosa, the starve-to-death disease stop menstruating.

"IMPURITIES"

Oh, that had stopped, she said. Girls on yoga diets of fruit often stopped menstruating, she told me. Tony said that was alright. It meant there weren't any impurities in their bodies. I quizzed her on the purpose of the menstrual cycle. Yes, she knew all that, but really it was hard to explain to me. Tony knew about these things. So I ran Tony before mid-night and asked him what-the-hell?

Not a bother on him, he replied. "If she wants to have periods all she has to do is eat cakes and biscuits. The yoga diet of fruit or fasting improves the body so much it becomes clean. There are no impurities to be drained away."

It is the first time since I have met Quinn that I can contradict him absolutely. Impurities? So much for the Guru's sex education. And Anne believes what he believes.

Anne is the middle one of 14 children. Her mother died 11 years ago, her father four years later. Her eldest sister took care of the family until she got married. Then it was the turn of the next sister, then the next and then Anne's.

She sees her family often and claims there is a change in their behaviour since she put them all on a well balanced diet free of sugar, flour and milk. Because of Tony she is better able to understand and love them.

FOOD FADDIST

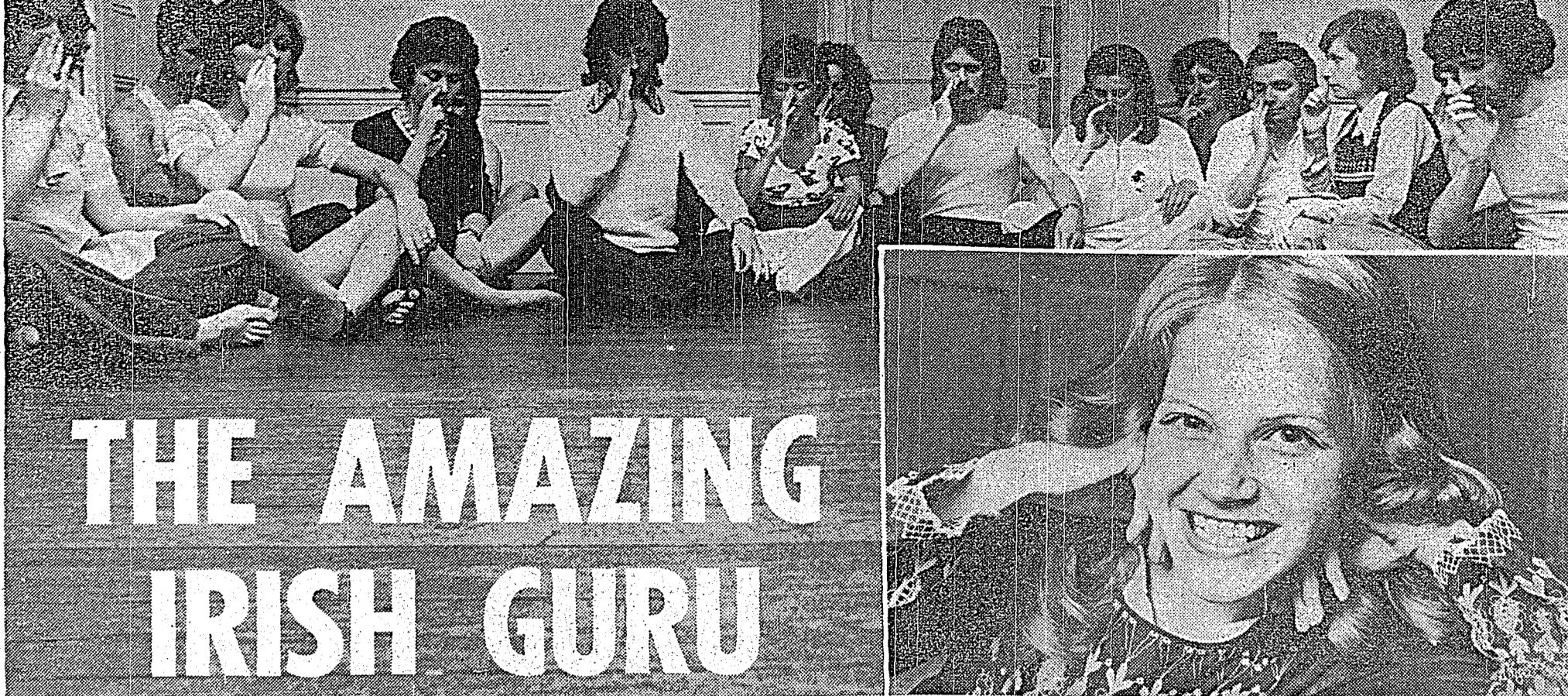
Before Tony Quinn became known for his yoga, he was recognised as a food faddist

DEALER IN FACTS

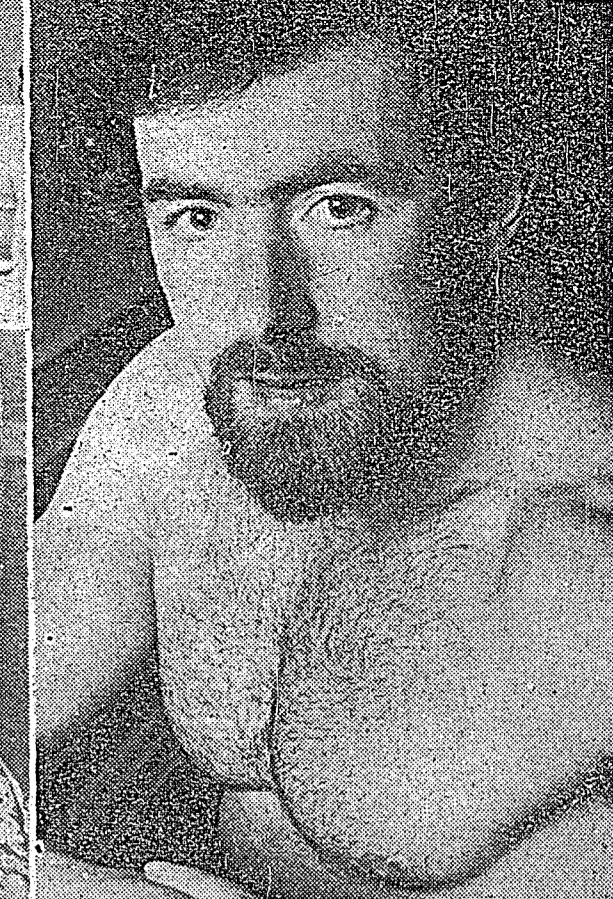
It is a pleasure to listen to Mrs. Blackmore on the subject of Yoga. She deals in facts. A practical Scotswoman with a teenage family who also do Yoga, she refers to references and cross-references and insists that the practice of Yoga is a discipline, not a power.

Nor will she discuss religious aspects. It is not the function of a Yoga teacher to influence people spiritually. Even Swamis, she says, who are spiritual leaders, did not attempt to do that when they were teaching her.

Lydia Blackmore, whose classes in Yoga start at the Dundrum Community Centre



THE AMAZING IRISH GURU



★ ANNE CONNOLLY, . . . 40 days fast.

★ TONY QUINN, . . . a guru with a difference.

LATE NIGHT EXTRA

Words:

JUNE LEVINE

Pictures:

CHARLES COLLINS

around town. Holder of a string of body beautiful titles, nobody could doubt his health and strength. The 28-year-old son of a taxi driver from Arbour Hill, Dublin, he claims that he was born with the ability to meditate. "It was like I could always hear someone speaking to me."

Material for his classes come to him from meditation, he claims. He has never been trained in yoga. Why should he teach Indian yoga? he asks.

An only child his birth to a childless couple was prophesied. A priest promised his mother that she would have a male child in her arms this time next year and along came Tony. His mother accepts his meditation, astral travel, thought force, aura changing and healing with gentle modesty. She signs up classes for him. His father cringes from the publicity.

He was never much good at school and went to work in a butcher shop at age 14. He got his intermediate certificate at age 18. About then he took a course of Karate, then weight lifting and became interested in magic books he found in the library.

He sold advertising for a while, rolled barrels for Guinness's and worked in health studios. Eventually he got a diploma at the International Federation of Physical Culture and a job at the Irish Civics Institute looking after playgrounds.

YOGA CITY

Tony got a Gold Medal for muscle control in 1965. He learned massage and physiology in Blackpool. He was teaching Yoga to models four years ago when he decided to go all out and set up classes throughout the city.

His aim is to build a Yoga city where all the people are claimed to have God's will. The commune has been a false start for they have to leave there next month and are looking for a new home.

Tony Quinn is an enigma. A surprisingly inarticulate man, he convinces people of things which they can then more clearly explain than he can himself. When the newspaper stink was going on I met a girl who claimed she had seduced her on the astral plane. When I asked him about it, Tony, never claiming celibacy, replied: "Of course it can be done, but I didn't do it. She's just a nervous type."

Martin Forde is a thin, pale young man who has done the 40 day Quinn fast. He says it did him a world of good. An economist, Martin lives in the commune with his wife Margaret, who is a guidance counsellor.

David and Aileen Cowman were visiting the commune. Theirs is a Quinn family. Even the baby doesn't have milk but gets bone meal tablets and half-but oil.

and the New Park Vocational School, is enraged by the "Quinn thing".

"It's just irritating to hear all the nonsense about fasts and meditation until you hear of an orphan girl on a 40 day fast. Yoga at the level Tony talks about is beyond the powers of many Swamis, and it takes about 12 years to become a Swami."

Yoga ought not to suffer because of the alleged sins of one man. Also I don't think because he is weak on facts regarding menstruation that it invalidates everything he does. Tony Quinn's Yoga is a brand product. You have a choice.

PLAYER'S

Nº6

Your kind of cigarette



...mild, smooth, satisfying

PHOTOGRAPHED IN GLENCAR, COUNTY KERRY

PACKETS CARRY A GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING.