

Evening Herald Damian Corless October 2001

As a young Dublin youngster Tony Quinn had a passion for magic. Today when he weaves his spell, he can charge clients up to £15,000 for two week seminars in the sun. Damian Corless reports.

"My father always had this idea that I was a genius", Tony Quinn once remarked, looking back on how he was brought up to have strong self-belief. His father, a taxi-driver from Arbour Hill, wasn't wide of the mark. Quinn has always displayed a remarkable genius for selling himself. A dozen health stores pay Tony Quinn to put his name over the door. The Tony Quinn logo adorns a bewildering array of slimming supplements, acne cures, tanning aids, "brain and muscle" agents, yoga courses, "happy" vitamins, and "self-healing" audio tapes. If you've cash left over, there's even a Tony Quinn Life Extension Mix.

SERVICES

Back in 1995 Quinn hired his services to boxer Steve Collins in the run-up to his WBO world title clash with Chris Eubank. Quinn described himself as Collins' "mental coach". Eubank was spooked. He believed that Collins had been hypnotised to feel no pain. "I wasn't hypnotised," boasted Collins after his victory. "We played a trick and fooled them all." Collins paid Quinn a cool £360,000 for his help which, it later emerged, included tax advice. These days 54-year-old Quinn is a get-setting tax exile. His home is sun-kissed Paradise Island in the Bahamas, while Jersey is his registered business base. Seminars and courses generate a steady flow of income for Quinn. This month his Successful Living seminars will be held across Dublin and in Cork, Galway, Dundalk, Waterford, Limerick and Belfast.

Achieving Successful Living the Tony Quinn way, involves learning the mind-improvement techniques he calls Educo. In the latest issue of his Blueprint for Successful Living freesheet, Quinn presents a disturbing choice: reap the benefits of his Educo system or stay "handicapped". His exact words are: "People have the choice to go on as they are - forgive me for being so blunt - literally handicapped, in comparison to the possibility of being able to use more of their brain and mind than ever before." Educo based courses in Successful Living cost £100 and are run by "tutors". To reap Quinn's insights from the man himself costs a hefty £15,000 for a two-week intensive seminar in the sun. Destinations so far have included Egypt and Quinn's Bahamas HQ. For those who complete the sunshine seminars, there's a "unique opportunity" to make back some of the outlay. The opportunity in question is to earn a £2,000 commission by signing-up individuals for future seminars at £15,000 a pop.

These people can in turn avail of the same "unique financial opportunity". Each seminar-goer they sign up down the line makes £1,000 for the person that originally signed them. The Arbour Hill kid with a passion for magic tricks has come a long way. As a youngster, Quinn earned pocket money selling the pools for the Augustinian Fathers. He trained as a butcher, but his sites (sic) were fixed on grander horizons. In 1970, he took the hippie trail to Africa where he meditated on a mountain top, as was the fashion. Back in Ireland he established Tony Quinn Yoga, and business boomed. He also pursued a parallel career as a body-builder, winning a clutch of Irish titles. From a young age, Quinn had been captivated by the Charles Atlas adverts which promised "You Too Can Have A Body Like Mine." He made that body his goal. "I ended up with the exact same measurements as him," he later recalled.

HEALING

But there was more to the young Tony Quinn than iron will and the work ethic. He believed he had a natural gift for healing. A former close associate said: "From the first time I met him he claimed he had healing powers, and I did see him make people feel better by putting them on a strict diet and fitness regime." Quinn assembled a team around him. They would take shifts on O'Connell Street, parading a banner listing Quinn's various abilities, including his healing powers. "Tony wasn't exactly what you'd call charismatic," said the former associate.

"He came across as macho rather than sophisticated. I think he knew this and I think that's why he's so obsessed with amassing qualifications. What he did have was a huge ego. He felt nothing was beyond him." Charismatically-challenged or not, Quinn drew a community of sorts around him. He moved people into his house, then houses.

One former assistant recalled: "I was being treated by Tony and I was approached by someone who said, "Would you like to join a house? We've brought your vibrations up as far as we can for now. The best thing is to move in with a group of like-minded, right-living people." "Tony started with a house in Templeogue and then had a 16-room house in Howth with maybe three to a room paying rent. Living as a community we were more able to focus on diet and meditation, he added. But back in the '70's the Catholic Church didn't smile on Quinn's community building. For some reason, the gardaí raided his house in Templeogue. There they found 50 people but no drugs, no orgies, and no reason to pursue the matter. By the early '80's Tony Quinn's blueprint for living was plopping onto carpets throughout Ireland.

CONCERNS

In late 1984 a doctor with the National Drugs Advisory Board, Dr. Allene Scott, raised concerns about some of the claims in its pages. Dr. Scott dismissed those for one anti-ageing product as "rubbish". The doctor also took a dim view of an advert, which read: "Girls, We Think Cocoa Butter Could Be The Answer To A Bigger Bust". Sixteen years on, the publication can still raise an eyebrow or two. For example, readers can avail of Educo Postal Requests for a fee for £25 per month, or £40 for a family. Readers who want to secure a particular "goal/outcome" are invited to send details, together with a recent photo and a cheque or postal order. The Tony Quinn Centre then sends out information on how to achieve the goal through mind-application. But there's more.

Every day for a month Tony Quinn and his aide Aideen Cowman will help to achieve reader's goals by "focusing one-directionally" on the desired outcome. This distance-assistance doesn't just work between Tony and the subscriber. The method does the biz for third parties who haven't a clue they're being helped. "It is equally effective in obtaining results for others who need not be aware of your request", it is claimed. According to a former Quinn associate, the basis of the Educo Postal Requests seems to be "absent healing". "In the early days Tony did all the healing himself," he recalled. "He'd tell people he was giving them a "healing blast", and say he didn't have to lay hands, but sometimes he would. Then he sort of delegated the healing. He made others healers. The postal requests seem to extend this into "absent healing".

The Evening Herald submitted a list of questions to the Tony Quinn Centre. These included queries about how the postal requests work, about the commission paid to seminar sellers, and about claims made in the latest issue of his newsletter.

Senior staff declined to reply.