



OIL BOSS: Susan Morrice

## Tax hit for rich Ulster oil barons

By JULIAN BROUWER

IRISH oil barons who struck black gold in a tiny Caribbean country are set to be hit where it hurts – in the pocket.

Ever since they found oil in Belize, Northern Irish company Belize Natural Energy has been pumping out giant quantities of the black stuff from the Spanish Lookout district of Belize, making oil the nation's booming industry.

The oil strike is said to have made fortunes for Belfast-born businesswoman Susan Morrice and Enniskillen native Sheila McCaffrey, who run BNE.

But the honeymoon is now over for Morrice and McCaffrey with newly-elected Dean Barrow announcing plans to introduce a windfall tax which will ensure that the people of Belize finally get a slice of the cake.

"We are going to impose a windfall tax on Belize Natural Energy to make up for the loss of revenue (incurred by) switching from imported fuel to local fuel. Barrow said.

### Exploiting

"We need to get more from the oil company for the people."

Locals who reckon BNE has been exploiting them aren't complaining.

As Niall Gillett – the former editor of the respected Belize Reporter newspaper – says: "BNE has its own share of dislike from the local populace. Most Belizeans feel the country did not receive enough of a share of this important asset."

"There's resentment towards both the old PUP Government for selling the country's oil without apparent accountability and also for making too sweet of an agreement for BNE."

Many locals resent BNE because they don't think poverty-stricken Belize is seeing any of the money for the oil strike, even though the previous PUP government was supposed to get 40% of all profits.

"No one can seem to say where the oil money has gone," adds Gillett.

Until BNE's surprise oil strike Belize, which boasts a population of just 280,000, relied mainly on tourism and agriculture. NOW BNE is pumping out oil said to be similar in quality to the prized low-sulfur crude which is drilled from the oil fields of West Texas.

# IT WAS A DEAD CERT OUR GIRL WOULD FAIL TO

# PSYCHED OUT

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE not to like Sally Norman.

The psychic to the stars – Sally's so big she can turn down Madonna and Demi Moore – is bubbly, warm, glam, affectionate and fun.

But when it comes to the whole talking to the dead and predicting the future we may have to agree to differ.

The usual deal when interviewing psychics is that their claims are put to the test with a reading, especially when they're plugging a show in the Waterfront in Belfast in October. For her latest publicity tour Sally has decided not to give readings to anyone.

In the words of manager Kevin, who remains in the room during our chat, surely we have more interesting things to talk about, like Sally's new series on ITV, or her autobiography, in all good book shops this autumn.

And any predictions or messages from dead friends and relatives would be so accurate I might become upset.

I bit my lip so hard it nearly became lunch.

After our chat I did get a reading, of sorts, but more of that later.

To be fair to Sally she has taken the psychic world of gypsy headscarves, crystal balls and clanking jewellery and rewritten the rules.

She writes a regular column for OK magazine, and is the first medium to be given her own TV series on ITV, which returns later this year.

It got round broadcasting guidelines by challenging the audience to make up their own minds about whether Sally's powers are genuine.

She can count Uma Thurman, George Michael and Robert de Niro among her clients, and famously counselled Princess Diana for several years.

### Clout

"She loved this esoteric world. If you were good, she found you," says Sally.

A measure of her celebrity clout was an invitation from Madge last year to give a reading at her home, but could Sally dress up like an end-of-the-pier clairvoyant? The invitation was politely, but firmly, declined.

And on a recent 10 day tour of America Demi Moore asked if Sally could accompany her to meet followers of the mystical Jewish off-shoot Kabbalah.

"I'm not into Kabbalah, and I didn't have time to meet her. She wasn't happy," says the psychic.

The celebrities don't even have to be alive to have an audience with Sally.

She had a regular column in Eve magazine, when they'd send her the names of dozens of the famous but dead, and ask her to scan the list until she got an image or a message. Queen's Freddie Mercury told Sally he missed sex, and Marilyn Monroe said she hadn't killed herself.

I ask her how beneficial it is for people to want to speak to the dead in the first place. Surely it's a bit unhealthy, particularly among the grief-stricken, to encourage afterlife chats, and how can the dead predict the future anyway. Aren't they a bit busy being dead?

With genuine sympathy Sally says she respects my right not to believe, but something tells me I'm a lone cynic in her world.

The 57-year-old has turned her gift into an international business which includes a website with readings by text, phone and email, and

## Medium is in demand for star readings

her own range of jewellery on GemsTV.

"When I was about three or four I went to a nursery so my mum could go to work, and my grandfather used to take me on his butcher's bike. One day I was sitting opposite another little girl and her grandfather was standing beside her. I asked the teacher why her grandfather was allowed to be there and mine wasn't," says Sally.

"He was standing looking at this little girl. I went to point to him and he looked at me and smiled and then disappeared. The teacher told me off and made me sit in the high chair as a punishment, so for a while I didn't tell



## ROISIN MEETS...

CELEBRITY PSYCHIC SALLY NORMAN

anyone about my funny dreams because I was afraid," she says.

"Years later, when I was about 27 I met a girl I hadn't seen since I was 14, and she asked me did I still do that funny thing. I had never given it a second thought. I must have used it as a bit of a party trick, but I'm not ashamed of that. It was just there."

Talking to the dead isn't scary, she says, even when a dead Kray twin appeared beside her in her Surrey kitchen.

"What frightens me now in my late fifties is the responsibility that goes with it because it's huge. I'm about to go on tour, there is a responsibility with that. I've seen five people a day for the last 22 years. That's the responsibility that frightens me," says Sally.

For her first national tour the intimacy of a one-to-one reading

will be swapped for auditorium filled with thousands of people, all hoping for their own individual message.

It's a daunting task, but Sally has enough character to fill a hall all by herself.

"My personality is entertaining. I'm meant to be doing this. I have a sister who could no more stand up on stage than fly to the moon. I think when it's effortless it's what you're meant to do. I couldn't have done this when I was 20 or 30, but I can do it now," says the psychic.

"People come really wishing they can get a message and I want to be able to reach as many people as I can. For each show we will have a psychic pod where people can leave a little video message.

"Hopefully we're going to have a few celebrities. I'm also going to be challenged by historians, but the show will evolve as we go along," says Sally.

She is unperturbed by new legislation, introduced at the start of May, which requires mediums and psychics to operate to the same standards of honesty as anyone else who wants to sell you a service. Anyone found guilty of misleading statements, omission or aggressive selling can be heavily fined or jailed for up to two years.

It's over to manager Kevin again to field this one, telling me that Sally welcomes this as it now means individuals have some legal protection, and psychics come under a duty of care.

### Ability

"You are always going to have people that have some ability but have it at different levels," says Sally.

"There are constant challenges. Because what I do is what I do and I'm not lying, or guessing, or cold reading, therefore I don't mind being challenged.

Every reading is a miracle," she says.

It's here that we come back to a sticky wicket when Sally asks me 'isn't every reading a miracle?' That respect for my scepticism has obviously waned slightly, but if my uncertainty about her craft has the slightest effect on the numbers of bums on seats during the tour I'll eat a crystal ball.

And I'd still invite Sally to a party as she'd be the life and soul, and possibly bring a few souls too.

\*On the matter of a reading I had decided before meeting her to consult one of her hand-picked psychics who'll help me with queries about my future, via text.

My question was simple. I texted 'Sally, will I ever have children', wondering if the spiritually gifted person on the other end would pick up that I already have two.

The message came back 'I sense once your (sic) settles within life and more content I feel this will happen for you I see you having a small and loving family in the future.' That'll be £1.50 please.

•An Audience with Sally Morgan, Star Psychic is on in the Waterfront Hall on October 1 & 2. Tickets are £21.50 from 90334455. Book online at www.waterfront.co.uk or www.wonderlandpromotions.co.uk

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LONG SERVING: Psychic Sally Norman pictured in Belfast

