

# Karangahape Rd: brothels to boutiques

by Marcus Stickley

Karangahape Rd is often viewed as a dark corner of Auckland known more for its brothels than boutiques, but the street is again blossoming as Auckland's cosmopolitan soul.

In the 1970s retailers had to pay \$50,000 up front, on top of the rent, to lease a shop in Karangahape Rd's St Kevin's Arcade, says Graham Shirley, jeweller and building manager of the George Court building.

Since starting his jeweller's apprenticeship in the La Gonda Building in 1969, Mr Shirley has spent his whole working life on Karangahape Rd.

"It was really busy and very cosmopolitan. The footpaths were packed all the time," says Mr Shirley.

"Then when St Lukes [Mall] opened up it ripped the guts out of Karangahape Road.

"The major businesses left. They just found it uneconomic to have a business on K Rd. Even though the rents were cheaper they just didn't have the turnover.

"Rendalls hung on and we thought if they ever left the street that would be the end of it."

Peter Hawkesby started hanging out on K Rd in 1965 when he was 15 and has owned the Alleluya Café in St Kevin's Arcade for the past 10 years.

"It went from being the centre of Polynesia, up to the mid 90s... I was away 10 years and when I came back it was a barren wasteland," he says.

Mr Shirley says that middle class



BAZAAR: Business is picking up on Karangahape Rd

shoppers found the malls more attractive than the city environment.

"Coming to K Rd, parking is a problem. All the malls, their parking is free. I think the malls are quite sterile.

"Up here we've had times when there have been a lot of homeless people living on the street and street kids... other negative things that are happening around the street.

"I feel that since the major retailers left and the rents came down it has been a starting point for a lot of new business. Innovative people would come into the area, start, and then move on to better areas to have their stores," says Mr Shirley.

K Rd is now attracting more new businesses that seem more likely to stay, particularly boutiques for young clothing designers and art galleries.

Atip Wananuruks says he's glad he had the foresight to open his urban clothing boutique, MAW, in what used to be the notorious Pink Pussy Cat Club, in July last year.

Mr Wananuruks says: "Ours was the worst unit. [The developers] couldn't even describe how bad it was.

"The vibe on K Rd reminds me of Soho in London, where I'm from. You've got artists, and Islanders, and your working girls. There's a lot of diverging culture," says Mr Wananuruks.

Early in 2003 the Auckland City Council began repaving the footpath and adding seating, bins, guard rails and plantings in a bid to make the area between Queen St and Pitt St/Mercury Lane more attractive to shoppers.

Mohan Daya, owner of the India Emporium, one of a cluster of Indian shops near the Queen St intersection, for more than 25 years, says the council could have done more and that increased rates are stifling development in the area.

"The lift that K Rd should have had hasn't happened," he says.

Others are more positive.

"People come and go, and now they

are coming back," says Mr Hawkesby.

Mr Shirley says: "The cycle has now moved around and we've got a really great supermarket and food hall in the old Rendalls building. I think it's great for K Rd."

"It's things like that that will get more people coming into the area."

Three businesses have recently become owner operated, including that of a local film producer who has bought the old Pascoes building, and Lamb's Pharmacy.

The buildings were bought from the Methodist Church, which along with the Baptist Church, owns most of the property on K Rd.

"Before, the churches owned most of the real-estate. Now we are all becoming owners of our own shops," says Mr Shirley.

More development is taking place, such as the multi-use 411Q building on the corner of Queen St, and property prices have jumped. Four years ago a two-bedroom apartment in the George Court building could be bought for \$230,000.

Mr Shirley says that the same apartment would now be valued in the high \$300,000s.

"We're becoming an extension of Ponsonby Rd," he says.

"I think Karangahape Rd will be quite a trendy suburb."

Mr Hawkesby says that K Rd will retain its past character:

"There's a more mad, more transient population here."

All agree that K Rd will retain its dynamic multicultural environment.

## NZ wind invention blows away energy enthusiasts

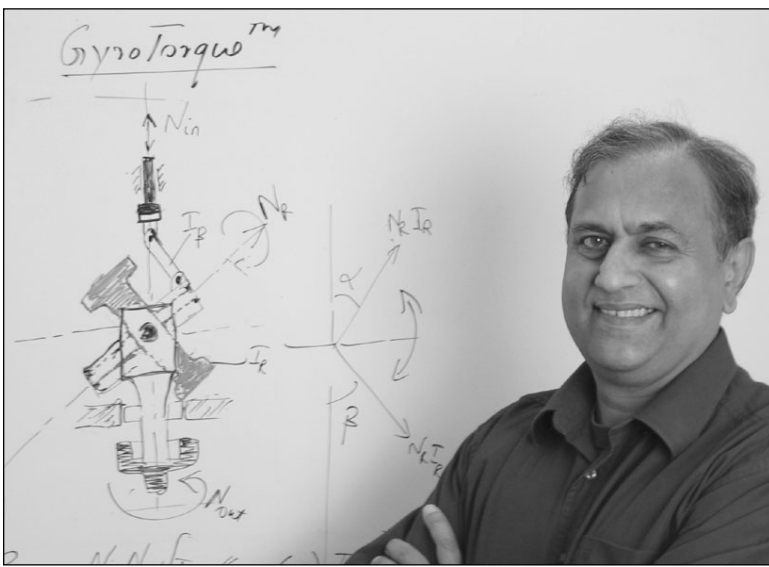


PHOTO: KIM REED

HARNESSING WIND ENERGY: Inventor Muthuvetpillai Jegatheeson

by Kim Reed

A New Zealand invention that increases the capture of wind and wave energy is gaining recognition for its ingenuity.

Muthuvetpillai Jegatheeson developed the GyroTorque over a number of years, and it was presented to the Global Windpower conference in Chicago last April.

"I was thrilled it was chosen to be presented, because not many [proposals] are accepted," says Mr Jegatheeson, who is managing director of Takapuna-based Gyro Energy Ltd.

"I think it was because the GyroTorque is a useful solution that can be used in so many different parts of the world for so many different applications."

He describes the GyroTorque as "an infinitely variable transmission system" based on gyroscopic reaction. This means that more power from wind and wave sources can be harnessed at higher speed ratios without the need for gears, and generate electricity at reduced costs.

Mr Jegatheeson first thought about the potential of gyroscopic reaction

during his undergraduate studies in his native Sri Lanka.

Despite numerous failed attempts, redundancy, a heart attack and lack of funds, he was determined to find an answer – even though it took him 10 years.

"I stopped asking myself 'How is it possible?' and started thinking 'Why isn't it possible?'. If I hadn't, I would never have come up with the solution," says Mr Jegatheeson.

Gyro Energy Ltd has a worldwide exclusive license to develop and market the technology for power generation. Investors – such as Edward Goldsmith, founder of The Ecologist magazine and a celebrated pioneer of Britain's environmental movement since the 60s – have helped to fund its development.

Marketing of GyroTorque is already underway in the USA. Hybrid Holdings Limited USA funds the patent protection of the device and is licensed to use the technology in transportation applications.

"The interest is very high. Those who understand the GyroTorque and its potential are very excited about it," says Mr Jegatheeson.

## News filtered pure on Te World.net

by Lucy Campbell

A New York University film graduate and an information technology major from Auckland University, may not seem likely candidates to launch an alternative news website, however that is exactly what Hamish Judson and Dan Paton decided to do.

A disillusionment with the mainstream media led long time friends Mr Judson (25) and Mr Paton (25) to stop complaining about the news and do something about it.

The pair launched their alternative news web site in January of this year. Although they do not write their own news stories, they work from their respective Auckland homes selecting news from local and international media sources that they believe to be important or underreported.

"TeWorld is an online news website and I guess if you look at the name, it's world news with a New Zealand

focus," says co-editor Mr Judson.

The website, TeWorld.net, has summaries of news and links to the full articles from news websites around the world that many readers may be unaware of, such as Aotearoa Independent Media Centre, Afrol News and Alternet.

TeWorld.net is not a money making venture and has very little advertising, but a labour of love that consumes hours each day as the pair scour the internet for "news that matters".

Neither of the editors has studied journalism, but say they have always been interested in the news which led them to develop the site.

Mr Judson's background as a web developer provided the technical skills to get the website up and running.

So why would anyone bother to put so much time and effort into a relatively unknown site that does not make money? Mr Judson says it was because he was sick of what he was

seeing on his television and in the newspaper and wanted to make a difference.

"I'm sick of reading about things like a cat was rescued from a tree and just boring inconsequential news that just clogs up your brain. I think people are overloaded with too much irrelevant information, so we try and filter that out and just leave readers with important news," says Mr Judson.

Despite TeWorld's lack of advertising, Mr Paton says the site attracts all sorts of viewers, "anybody who's interested in a little bit more in-depth analysis and variety".

Currently the duo only rewrite the headlines for the stories they use,

"Often I think the headlines miss the point. They won't call a spade a spade," says Mr Judson.

The pair do have plans to start writing some local issue stories in the future. For now, they will continue to compile news from around the world.

## Pub beats council in pokie battle

by Nadia Tolich

Publican Denise Williams has won her battle with the Auckland City Council to retain pokie machines in her Grey Lynn bar.

Under the council's draft gambling policy, it wanted to remove all pokie machines from all venues that are not casinos in Auckland suburbs and instead place them into venues in the CBD.

Mrs Williams' tavern Radarz is located in the Grey Lynn shops on Great North road, just outside the proposed CBD requirement.

Under the draft policy, Mrs Williams would have had to move the tavern to a central location or give up her machines, "It would have been difficult," says Mrs Williams if Radarz lost the machines.

She decided to fight for an amendment to this clause within the draft, not only for her establishment but 26 others located outside of the CBD. She won.

Mrs Williams says if any other small business runs into similar local

government problems they should make themselves heard.

"If they give you the opportunity to say something, then go for it," she says.

She says if pokie machines are taken out of the suburbs then gambling problems will increase as people will have to travel further to get to them, consequently staying for longer periods of time and spending more money.

She says if people do not go to Radarz to play on the machines "they are going to go somewhere else".

The pokie machines at Radarz are owned by Century Foundation, a gaming machine trust.

Her patrons indicated that pokie machines were wanted in the Grey Lynn area.

"I went to the foundation, as there were no machines around here," she says.

She now believes that pokies situated in the area are beneficial as the money collected is "going back to the local community".

Mrs Williams is used to bureaucratic battles having already handed over nine of her 18 machines under the Gambling Act in 2003.

The money collected from Mrs Williams' machines is distributed within the Grey Lynn area including Grey Lynn primary school and the Grey Lynn community centre.

The Auckland City Council established the gambling venue policy under the 2003 Gambling Act to control the growth of gambling within the city, minimising the harm of gambling, including addiction and monitoring machine operators within non-casino venues.

It also aimed to ensure all funds acquired by machines are distributed fairly to the community.

"If they give you the opportunity to say something, then go for it."