



Anne and one of her 'adopted' children

This Aussie yoga teacher was creating her own master race to take over the world



A mother of

PURE

In the dementia wing of a Victorian nursing home an elderly woman spends her days

clutching a plastic baby doll.

She holds the doll close to her chest and rocks it back and forth. Sometimes she talks to it or dresses it.

Her name is Anne Hamilton-Byrne. Few would guess she was once the beautiful yet sinister leader of a cruel cult and a woman who claimed to be Christ reincarnated.

Back in the early 1960s, Anne was a pretty, charismatic Melbourne yoga teacher.

It was an era that spawned free love, drug experimentation and alternative ways of living. People were looking for gurus at the time and Anne filled that vacuum.

Blending eastern mysticism, aliens and Christianity, she and her husband, Bill, recruited followers from her yoga classes to join her cult, called The Family.

Doctors, lawyers and architects from high society flocked to be part of it. In fact,

the couple only recruited wealthy people with the status and skills they needed.

One of her first converts was qualified physicist and academic Raynor Johnson. He left his job believing he was John the Baptist reincarnated.

Anne preached to The Family that they needed to

prepare for an alien invasion in which the world would be cleansed of evil.

She told followers she once died for a few minutes and rose from the dead and that miracles were delivered during yoga.

One of the ways Anne prepared for the aliens was to create her own master race to take over the world, which included

her idea of perfect children.

With the help of compliant social workers, psychiatrists and gullible followers, she and Raynor 'adopted' children into the cult.

False papers were drawn up

so that unwanted children or the offspring of single mothers who'd been pressured to give them up, could be adopted.

The children grew up in isolation, believing the bizarre couple were their natural parents and that their 'mother' was a living God. Other adults in The Family were referred to as aunties and uncles.

Anne insisted the children be dressed identically and their hair be dyed peroxide blonde and cut in the same shaped bob. Not only did she believe this made them look like real siblings, she also thought they could pass for her own.

Once they were inducted, the children endured severe



Raynor Johnson

"The world would be cleansed"



Anne with her husband Bill (left) at court

The children of The Family



Every one of them had been brainwashed to believe Anne and her husband were their biological parents.

One of the children removed in the raid was Ben Shenton, who was given to the cult to be brought up by the charismatic 'mother' when he was just 18 months old.

Ben, now 15 years old, was clinging to the staircase during the raid and fought against being removed from the only parents he'd ever known. He'd been brought up to believe police were evil.

He later described his childhood home as being like an institution where the children were forced to do yoga and fed very little food.

Ben said when he wasn't being punished, he was helping other children be punished.

"Removal of food, beatings. Some of them were put outside at night," he said. "What she did was totally wicked and evil."

Anne was visiting the US at the time of the

raid and later extradited back to Australia to face charges.

She fought the charges, claiming the children were her biological offspring.

Ultimately, the decision was made that the children were too young to give evidence.

So, Anne and her husband only ever faced charges of perjury.

Anne Hamilton-Byrne was fined \$5000 for falsifying the documents of three of her adopted children.

She still had up to 50 followers living in an estate and the surrounding hills in Olinda, Vic.

Later, she received a visit from Sarah Moore, also known as Sarah Hamilton-

"What she did was wicked and evil"



Anne holding a picture of Sarah

Byrne, the 'daughter' who exposed her to the authorities.

The two shared an emotional reunion and Sarah said she could not escape the fact she still looked to Hamilton-Byrne as her mother.

"I believe she initially meant well with both creating the cult and collecting us children," Sarah said.

Hamilton-Byrne, who claimed her only regret in life had been losing touch with her 'daughter' Sarah Moore, was touched by the reconciliation.

"I'm ready to die now," she said.

Former cult victims started coming forward to sue her for damages relating to abuse, cruelty, the forced use of drugs like

LSD and forced imprisonment.

By then Hamilton-Byrne was already suffering from dementia but was still able to claim, "I am the one true master."

The cult leader defended the way she raised The Family and attacked those who said she mistreated them as "lying bastards".

Now aged in her late 80s, Hamilton-Byrne has flashes of her former self - a woman born Evelyn Edwards into a family rife with mental illness.

While she rarely talks anymore, it's unlikely the controversy she created through The Family is over.

Many of the children raised in the cult still live with the consequences, suffering from a range of serious psychiatric problems. Sadly, some have committed suicide.

With Hamilton-Byrne believed to have amassed an estate worth at least \$10 million, those who suffered under her reign will be sure to challenge for a share of it when she dies.

***Rosie Jones's documentary, *The Family*, will be in cinemas from February 23, 2017. For screenings, go to www.thefamilysect.com**



Sarah Moore finally exposed Anne



Ben Shenton was raised in the cult

EVIL

emotional, physical and, on occasion, sexual abuse. They were forced to take LSD in their search for enlightenment and were starved and beaten as punishment.

Anne and some other cult members lived at a sprawling, isolated compound at Lake Eildon, NSW. Others in the sect lived on remote properties in the Dandenong Ranges.

The Family flew under the radar for almost two decades until one of Anne's favourite children, Sarah, was thrown out of the cult for disobedience.

Two years later, she reported the cult to the police and they raided the property. They took six young children, dressed in their infamous identical style, into custody.

Police later found another 14 children that had been raised in the isolated home.