

HD **Merritt sells bakery to former apprentice**

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AFTER a life's work behind a hot oven, **Chinchilla** man Ron Merritt has been bought out by one of his own apprentices.

The **business** began in 1980 when the Merritt brothers, Ronald and Kenneth, realised they were not making enough dough and kneaded to get ahead.

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So Ken left the elevator repair **business** and Ron **sold** his shop on the Gold Coast but they still didn't have enough to set up a bakery in **Chinchilla**.

They pawned what they had left, got a loan and rented the Dorney building – the current location of Southern Cross Ford – in 1980.

After three floods in three years, they shifted further up the highway toward the Wambo St intersection and, for 26 years, they were flood-free.

In that time the **business** boomed and Ron bought out his brother to become the face behind one of **Chinchilla**'s most recognised brands.

This recognition stemmed from the charitable nature of the **business**: Whenever a church fete, cancer walk, fun run or community information night needed **bread** rolls donated, Merritts Bakery was always the best bet.

Collectively, the Dorney-Merritt legacy spans nearly a century of baked goods and Ron was happy to announce his return to the quiet life.

This move leaves the **business** in the hands of 24-year-old Benjamin Menkin and his fiancée, Brittany Donnelly.

Ron met his apprentice-to-be when the lad, who was 12 years old and new to **Chinchilla**, became his neighbour.

Years later, after deciding butchering did not make the cut, Ben used his connection to switch into a four-year apprenticeship with Ron.

When Ron entered into discussions with Brisbane investors earlier in the year, Ben began to see himself in the boss's role and eventually bought the **business**.

"People think I'm mad doing this so young but it's a good opportunity owning a **business** at my age. It's an established, respected name in the **Chinchilla** district and that's worth something," he said.

"I plan to maintain the **business**, and expand into more products down the line.

"The hours I don't mind at all because, when you leave, you've got a half day to do whatever you want."

Ron Merritt said choosing to sell to Ben was “the best thing for the town”, and wished him luck.

Ron Merritt and his family will remain in **Chinchilla**.

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