Flash, dash and lots of cash

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COLUMNIST

TRADE TALK | Self-styled 'second coming of Bruce Lee' likes to see Vancouver from the back of a chromed-up Fat Boy

ALAN CHEN, 34, is still pretty much the whiz kid he was when he earned his University of B.C. degree in economics at age 19 and an MBA at 22. Today, he is a partner in Dexior Financial, a boutique banking firm in Taiwan. The core business is with the portfolio fund managers of mutual billion-dollar industries like Templeton, Fidelity and Capital Research.

Ranked by Asian Money magazine as having Asia's best research team, CLSA is the subsidiary of France's huge Credit Agricole bank.

On a recent flying visit here, Chen rode a customized Harley Davidson 1000th-anniversary 2003 Fat Boy with 900 kilometres on the clock to visit a fellow MBA student and continuing "mentee." That was one-time city-mate pistol **Andrea Eng**, who happened to be in town, too, and calls Chen "the 34-year-old **Peter Brown** of Asia."

Chen himself also likes to call on old business-school pals like investment banker **Nathan Himmelfarb** and **Lorn Kong**, mortgage broker **Rich Nichols**, financial consultant **Rob Sakaguchi** and stunt-man **Paul Wu**, who recently doubled Hong Kong movie star **Chow Yun-Fat**.

Of Eng, Chen says, "He'd always want toe on your side, because she's the one who's always stars 'em in the net. She's also a great executioner — whether you want to execute a relationship or, when someone must be sacrificed."

Shortly after graduation, Himmelfarb and Chen recruited his fashion-designer fiancée, the now-great artist Sharon Tse (**Sky and Sun Hypothesis**).

"Great artists have excellent eyesight," he said. "When they come at [newcomers], they bump you first, then open their jaws and look inside."

Finding a powerful impression, he advised: "That's when they say, 'Oh, it's not a nice, fat woman.' So they spit you out, and you hemorrhage to death."

Asked if this knowledge had benefited his career at CLSA and, earlier, as top sales trader at Japan's giant Nomura brokerage, he laughed, "Yes," he said, "if you only want to use the silent once — and have your hand on the knobs."

He had his own misfits on very little as a Lord Nelson Elementary student, even though father **Wen Hsiang Chen** was a university teacher. Mother **Sylvia** was later become a celebrated "dragon" for Chinese Arts and Crafts and becoming the exclusive distributor for Shelley-ivy milk products.

That's when he got the hots for "$20,000 motorcycles with $100,000-worth of chrome on them." His enough to know that today's young want bikes as spare and purposeful as the Honda RS/R he rides in Taiwan, he said of the nocco-hog: "I have all the chrome. It gives me a dream of accomplishment."

So does "seeing myself as the second coming of Bruce Lee."

The late movie star, he said, "was the first modern Asian hero that all races wanted to emulate.

"Bruce came to North America, and I went to Asia. That's the irony: you're always going to where you have the least

Lorn Lohan and Nathan Himmelfarb infuse chill and tomatoes to Mexico as shampoo and bodycare products.

Jason Sugar and brother Damon's sugarandsugar lounge may branch out to Calgary or even London.

Developer wannabe Justen Harcourt wore he's fattening in dad Mike's political footsteps.

past-tried-and-tell. When I went to Asia, in 1996, my Chinese reading and writing skills were very weak.

But not his people skills. Seeking work as an intern at Nike's Singapore office, "I were a double-breasted suit, put my Air Huaraches on the [interviewer's] table and said: 'This is how much I love Nike. I won't wear dress shoes. You've got to hire me.'"

He got the gig.

But he, in fact, wear dress shoes then?

"Of course," Chen said, laughing.

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NATHAN HIMMELFARB and **Lorn Lohan** have found a way to export chill, cactus and warm lettuce products to their native Mexico.

Not to eat, mind you. And not yet in container lots. But they say 50 per cent of the $300,000-worth of shampoos, conditioners, sunscreen and skincare products they shipped last year

were wealth of the Rio Grande.

It'll be the same with this year's targeted $500,000 output.

Alan Chen handles brokerage billions in Fat City Taipei, rides his rococo Harley Fat Boy on trips home.

Online service compares health products

HealthPricer.com targets lucrative U.S. market

BY DERRICK PENNER
SUN BUSINESS REPORTER

A Vancouver-based health-information firm is attempting to reach the $1-billion US American online-shopping market with a Web-based comparison shopping service called HealthPricer.com.

Launched Wednesday morning, HealthPricer.com allows consumers to compare health products from different U.S. and online suppliers based on price, quality and customer service ratings, said George Fleming, CEO of HealthPricer.com's parent company, OneProvenHealth Science Inc.

Fleming said HealthPricer.com's beta version, developed at the company's south Vancouver offices, is starting operations in the U.S. market with an emphasis on online vitamin buyers he described as being worth $720 million US per year.

However, Fleming's goal is to expand its services to include over-the-counter drugs, skin-care products, sports-related items and pharmaceuticals.

"The online U.S. health-care space is providing consumers with shopping, which is amazing," Fleming added, because health care is one of the largest and "most dysfunctional" factors in consumer markets.

"There are discrepancies in prices all over the map, and it's very confusing for consumers [so]," he added.

HealthPricer.com allows consumers to browse through the product offerings of some 80 online retailers of dietary supplements that have registered with the site. Fleming said that the company has the allied itself with major certification bodies, that monitor quality of supplies.

OneProvenHealth is banking on emulate the success of other online comparison shopping engines, such as Shopping.com and Google's Froogle shopping search engine.

However, Fleming said his company is seeking to differentiate itself from its rivals by giving consumers tools to quick search criteria that they can search by.

Shopping.com, the first publicly traded comparison shopping site, was recently sold to eBay for $620 million US.

Fleming said HealthPricer.com's in-person development team was led by Carol Zobel, a former executive of Vancouver's Blue Rubin.

OneProvenHealth is listed on the TSX Venture Exchange, where the company's shares rose two cents to close at nine cents on Wednesday trading.

The company, Inc. its audited financial statements, reported a $2.7-million net loss on revenue of $101,438 for its year ending March 31. At year end, OneProvenHealth was carrying an accumulated deficit of $4.1 million.

George Fleming, CEO of HealthPricer.com, and Gord Zobel, vice-president of e-commerce.

DAMON and **JASON SUGAR** have turned their two-year-old sugarandsugar lounge into a real little sweet spot. Not so little, either. With 6,100 square feet on two levels, the brothers' Powell-at-Columbia Street facility has a permitted occupancy of 300. And most who attend the rather elegant joint — which has liquor-primary and food-primary licences — are much less raffish than when it was the Anchor pub and later Club Elite.

That's because the lounge is now a venue for private parties hosted by the likes of B.C. Hydro, Electronic Arts Canada, Giorgio Armani, MCL Motor Cars and even the Vancouver Board of Trade. Such clients pay at least $15,000 for a package of facilities and services. The average, for a schedule targeted to hit five nights weekly by year's end may be near $25,000. And, although the brothers were reluctant to name such a figure, former limousine operator Damon asked: "Who's to say we can't have an average event of $50,000?"

"Event" is the key word, since the brothers are in fact event planners who happen to own their own facility. At least, they and silent-partner members of Dexior Financial Inc. *control* their own facility, paying some $9 a foot in the first term of a five-plus-three fives lease.

Sugarandsugar was only months old when the brothers ended their nights as an open-to-the-public facility. They then concentrated on holding contracted events, as well as being a shooting location for such movies as Universal Pictures' *Connie and Carla*.

"It's a much better business model," said former computer programmer Jason. The transition entailed adding $400,000-worth of improvements to an original $600,000 investment, and, Jason predicted, they'll soon do it all again elsewhere.

"Calgary would be the easiest," he said, citing that city's proximity and abundance of cash and corporate head offices. "But what would be smartest?"

"With Dexior's venture-capitalist partners active in Britain, "They are talking of actively taking [sugarandsugar] there and elsewhere," workaholic Jason said.

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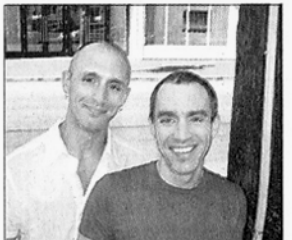

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