

Banker knows how to make do in a pinch on a wilderness trek



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TRADE TALK | When his dirt bike quit, HSBC exec Jeff Dowle's makeshift repair got him back to civilization

JEFF DOWLE, the HSBC Bank Canada executive vice-president, looks from his Georgia-at-Hornby office window to see a huge pendulum swinging in the lobby below.

The constant reminder of time passing may make him think there is more to life than almost four decades of commercial-banking activity.

Whatever, the 57-year-old still plays old-guy hockey, shooting left and playing right wing, "because I can't turn right well or skate backward."

Dowle also cruises the blacktop aboard his Harley-Davidson Electra Glide Ultra Classic motorcycle. But he's no sissy biker. Riding a Kawasaki 650, he joins financier pal **Steve Funk**, city lawyer **Fred Shandro** and Calgary lawyer **Gordon Dixon** on wilderness boonie-bashes to the Chilcotin Plateau.

Once, after smashing a hole in the engine casing of a Honda 250 dirt bike, he took remedial steps any banker would applaud: "I cut a branch, made a plug, wrapped it in gauze, wired it in, rode the bike to One-Eyed Man Lake, caught a float plane, and was back in town for an **Elton John** concert."

Dowle plays piano, too. His most recent foray was to Wild Rose Country, where he tagged 16-year HSBC hand **Wayne Berg**, 47, to be commercial financial services V-P.

Berg succeeds long-timer **Greg Sprung**, who now heads the Alberta-based Canadian Western Bank's operations here. He joins **Bruce Clarke** and **Adrian Chan** in a main-branch trio reporting to Dowle via **Mike Cegin**.

B.C. Children's Hospital Foundation director Dowle may value Berg (who is also a left-shooting hockey forward) for heading a Foothills Hospital \$2.5-million capital campaign. As a banker, though, it is because commercial loans reportedly increased eightfold during Berg's seven-year stint in Calgary. Commercial business there is now closing on the "low 20-per-cent range" of activity it accounts for in B.C., Dowle said.

Still, Berg may see little of the oil-and-gas activity that was his daily fare in Tulsa North, and not much of the



Andrea Bak and Jodi Leclair's Bachelor Plan associates doff their tops to deal winning hands, guaranteeing the house will always lose its shirt.

capital-market approaches by public companies.

Last year, the 170-office, 126-branch Canadian HSBC Group reported net income of \$457 million, deposits of \$38.6 billion and assets of \$49.2 billion.

JIMMY PATTISON prefers "going to work in the morning than going to Hawaii," according to a *Vancouver Sun* story April 10. But the busy billionaire has taken family vacations — in a motor home, no less.

According to daughter **Cynthia Kilburn**, who related the tale while cruising Indian Arm aboard the 150-foot Pattison yacht *Nova Spirit*, Jimmy once drove her and mom **Mary** to the B.C. Interior aboard the ponderous vehicle.

Spotting a small town's Overwaitea grocery store, Kilburn recalled, the early-to-bed Pattison dropped anchor in its parking lot, put on his pyjamas and hit the hay. Nor would he get up when there were loud knocks at the door. Instead, Mary opened it to find an RCMP officer saying: "You can't park here."



Pattison

"He owns the place," Mary reportedly replied.

That didn't placate the bylaw-enforcing copper. Which is why the PJ-clad Pattison had to get up, start his engine, follow the RCMP cruiser to a lot behind the police station, and only then return to dreamland.

HARRI JANSSON stood beneath the HSBC building's swinging pendulum Monday, but only partially in his capacity as a B.C. banker who has moved to Alberta.

As honorary Finnish consul, Jansson accompanied that nation's ambassador to Canada, **Pasi Patokallio**, when the latter opened an exhibition of Helsinki urban architecture and Finnish chairs and textiles staged by the Hughes Condon Marler architectural firm here.

Jansson, who preceded now-B.C. finance minister **Carole Taylor** as Vancouver Board of Trade chair, now spends weekdays in Edmonton as senior vice-president of ATB Financial. That's the provincially owned \$22-billion bank that has 151 branches in Alberta.

The one-time Bank of Montreal executive was Coast Capital Savings' CEO here before heading the Arthur Andersen firm's consulting-services

group in Toronto. He deftly parachuted himself from that gig as Arthur Andersen became mired in the Enron fiasco

ANTON ABRAMOVICH, whose www.greatestates.ca website tracks luxury-home prices in B.C., has spotted a record listing.

It's the \$25 million asked for a 15,850-square-foot home at 3195 Humber Road, Victoria. The nine-bedroom, seven-bathroom mansion occupies a 2.5-acre site with 460 yards of oceanfront on Oak Bay. The price puts it \$4 million above mining billionaire **Robert Friedland's** 11,000-square-foot home on West Vancouver's Radcliffe Avenue, Abramovich reports.

Still, with nearby properties listed \$15-million cheaper, the Oak Bay home may be suffering from realtoritis. "On a bad day, this home will sell for \$11 million, and, on a good day, it will sell for ... \$16 million," Abramovich writes.

ANDREA BAK and **Jodi Leclair** figure two trends will help their The Bachelor Plan firm — www.thebachelorplan.com — hit the jackpot. One is the surging worldwide interest in poker, especially Texas Hold 'Em. The other is maledom's continuing interest in bare-breasted women.

After a \$20,000 start-up, their cash-flow-financed, eight-month-old outfit stages poker games where any of its 20 contracted dealers, masseuses and support staff work topless. At their Gastown place, the rate is \$200 per participant, Bak and Leclair said Tuesday. At yours, it's \$75 per hour for each person the two send along.

"We call them the girls next door — but with their tops off," Bak said.

Should clients ask for more, Bak said: "Each girl signs a contract with us, saying they will not engage in sex. We make it clear: 'If we catch you at it, you're gone.'"

The girls also pay for their own bustier-and-skirt uniforms.

According to Leclair, men value the service because once-male-preserve strip clubs and pubs "are now monopolized by women [attendees]. That's why we coined the slogan: 'Where men can be men.'"

Such men may get that chance soon in a River Rock casino-hotel penthouse, regarding which Bak and Leclair said a pending association with The Bachelor Plan will be detailed via a joint website.

As for the folk they train and send out, "They like us because we're women, too, and we respect them," Leclair said. Should one call in to report on an uncomfortable situation, she said, "We tell the client: 'That's it. The party's over.'"

Bak, however, is looking forward to seeing plenty of wildlife this summer. That'll be when she and stockbroker-entrepreneur **Brendan Murray** take a delayed honeymoon trip to Tanzania.

RON BURKLE, the Californian billionaire, has accused *New York Post* gossip columnist **Jared Paul Stern** of asking for \$220,000 to keep certain information about Burkle out of print.

Such activities once took place at a much higher level.

In his book *The Big Spenders*, late *New York Herald Tribune* columnist Lucius Beebe wrote of Colonel William Mann, who, a century ago, published a well-informed scandal-and-titillation weekly called *Town Topics*. When particularly juicy stories concerned the very rich, the colonel (his military rank was genuine) suavely volunteered galley proofs for their subjects' "corrections."

Mann's will was probated in 1920, Beebe wrote, and disclosed outstanding debts for "loans" from various Goulds, Vanderbilts, Morgans, or their estates — none of which was ever presented for collection.

If Mann's putative subjects slept easier, so did those affected by his other business interests.

For North American railways, he developed the Mann Boudoir Car as an alternative to George Pullman's sleepers. With Belgian Georges Nagelmackers, he put the luxury car on European tracks by founding the Wagons-Lits company that is still in business — and enjoying respectful press treatment — today.

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Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, (left) and Johnny Chou, president of Google China, unveil the new Chinese-language Google brand name in Beijing on Wednesday.

In Chinese, Google is 'Gu Ge,' or 'Valley Song'

Firm defends its cooperation with China's censors

BY JOE McDONALD

BEIJING — Google Inc. CEO Eric Schmidt defended the search engine's cooperation with Chinese censorship as he announced Wednesday the creation of a Beijing research centre and unveiled a Chinese-language brand name.

Google is trying to raise its profile in China after waiting until January to launch its Chinese-language site Google.cn. Activists have criticized the company for blocking searches for material about Taiwan, Tibet, democracy and other sensitive issues on the site.

"We believe that the decision that we made to follow the law in China was absolutely the right one," Schmidt said at a news conference.

He said Google had to accept restrictions in order to serve China, which has the world's second-largest population of Internet users after the United States, with more than 111 million people online.

Schmidt also announced the creation of a research centre in Beijing that he said should have 150 employees by mid-2006 and "eventually thousands of people." He said the centre is meant to create products for markets worldwide, though he said planning was still in such an early stage that he didn't know what they might be.

Schmidt was speaking at a ceremony to announce Google's Chinese-language brand name — "Gu Ge," or "Valley Song," which the company says draws on Chinese rural traditions to describe a fruitful and rewarding experience.

Talking to reporters later, Schmidt said Google's managers were stung by criticism that they accepted Chinese censorship, but said they haven't lobbied Beijing to change its rules.

"I think it's arrogant for us to walk into a country where we are just beginning to operate and tell that country how to operate," he said.

Asked whether Google might try to persuade Beijing to change its restrictions, Schmidt said he didn't rule anything out, but said it hasn't tried to change such limits elsewhere. He noted that Google's site in Germany is barred from linking to Nazi-oriented material.

"There are many cases where certain information is not available due to local law or local custom," he said.

Schmidt said China accounts for only a small portion of Google's revenues because the company has only recently obtained a licence to allow it to carry local advertising. But he said the company expects China to be an important part of its future business.

One possible Google project in China would be to make Chinese books available online in digital form or to use translation software to produce English-language editions, Schmidt said.

He said the Beijing technical centre could quickly become Google's biggest outside the United States, surpassing its European lab in Zurich, Switzerland.

Chinese universities "are now churning out a very large number of very, very good programmers," he said. "So we are moving quickly now to hire the best and the brightest."

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Financial VP Harri Jansson joined Finnish ambassador Pasi Patokallio at architecture-products show.



Wayne Berg had HSBC biker-banker Jeff Dowle bring him from Alberta to handle commercial business here.

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AMERICAN INVENTOR

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