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Bankrupt salesman clears debts selling vintage liquor

破產業務買賣老酒 還清百萬債務

A former salesman from Changhua County who acquired heavy debts and a drinking problem when his stock market investments went south, has managed to clear his debts by trading vintage spirits, for an initial investment of just NT$100,000.

Huang Chih-chang graduated from vocational school before becoming a salesman five years ago, but when he borrowed money to invest in the stock market, instead of turning a profit, he ended up in the red. The financial pressure drove him to drink, and before long he was drinking every day. Eventually, someone advised him to invest in vintage spirits and before long he had cleared his debts. He now stores hundreds of bottles of vintage liquor in his 30 ping (93m^2) apartment.

Huang usually buys western liquor and rice wine, with the best rice wine being V.S.O. Kaoliang from Kinmen. There are more varieties of western liquor on the market, so it's harder to determine their real quality, but under close examination it's possible to discern the good ones.

Over a 30-year period the price of a bottle of liquor can increase in value by up to 50 times. Huang said it costs between NT$8,000 and NT$10,000 to buy a 0.6l bottle of kaoliang that only cost NT$200 when it was produced in Kinmen in 1980.

Where can such liquor be found? Retired soldiers are a good place to start, given that many who served in Kinmen bought bottles of kaoliang as souvenirs or gifts for friends, and often received large quantities of kaoliang on leaving the army. With adequate persuasion many former soldiers can be convinced to sell, and turning a profit is not difficult.

When it comes to very good western liquor, some opportunities occur by accident. Huang said those who drank western liquor in the past were generally wealthy, so it's hard to make them part with their liquor if they aren't in need of cash. Retired sportsmen who traveled abroad during their career may have bought some western liquor at the airport, which can then be snapped up when their money supply dries up later in life.

Retired civil servants can also be a good source of quality liquor. Huang said many high-ranking policemen didn't want to drink the really good liquor they were given during their career, and then in old age refrain due to health considerations. In such cases, they're happy to trade their bottles for cash. Mafia bosses can also be a good source of western liquor.

Buying liquor means nothing unless you can sell it. Huang is familiar with many buyers who frequently travel between Taiwan and China. These buyers in turn know many wine tasters and liquor-loving wealthy people, so he doesn't worry too much about being stuck with large quantities of unsellable liquor. As long as it is good liquor, it will find its buyer.

The profit margin in the vintage liquor business can be as high as 30 to 40 percent, but Huang says the business is not free from swindlers. Some try to trick buyers with false liquors, and if you happen to have too much cash on you, they might even rob you.

(LIBERTY TIMES, TRANSLATED BY TAIJING WU)

彰化縣一名男子之前從事業務工作，因投資股票失利，財務陷入困境，因而天天以酒解悶，後來他靠著買賣老酒還清了百萬元債務。

高職畢業的黃智章五年前是個業務員，為了多賺點錢，用融資玩股票，結果慘遭套牢，經濟壓力讓他天天灌酒。後來經人介紹，透過老酒收購不久就還清債務，三十坪大（九十三平方公尺）的住家堆滿數百瓶市場炙手可熱的陳年老酒。

一般收購習慣分成洋酒與白酒兩類，白酒以金門酒廠出品的陳年高粱為首選，洋酒因市場紛亂，品質難辨，但仔細檢視還是可以挑到好貨。

三十年的時間，一瓶酒的身價可以翻五十倍！黃智章說，像是金門酒廠於民國六十九年生產的陳年特級高粱一瓶六百西西，當年要價二百元，他們要花八千到一萬元才買得到。

這些酒到底去哪邊找呢？金門高粱往老兵或退伍的職業軍人身上找準沒錯。在前線當兵，回台一定會帶高粱酒送人或自己保存，退伍紀念高粱酒更不可少，只要說動老兵脫售，買到賺到。

珍貴的老洋酒則是可遇不可求。他說，早年在台灣喝洋酒的非富即貴，不過，這些人如果不缺錢，很難成交。退休國家級運動好手當年為國爭光之餘，也可能在機場買瓶洋酒紀念，一旦貧窮潦倒，成交的機會高。

好酒也可能藏在退休公務員身上。黃智章說，不少高階警官捨不得喝別人送的好酒，上了年紀，因健康因素更喝不得，於是出清老酒換現金。混跡江湖的「老大」常幫忙喬事情，也經常有珍貴洋酒。

懂得買，也要懂得賣！他認識多名遊走兩岸的買主，這些買主又認識品酒行家或「求酒若渴」的富豪，只要是好酒，不怕賣不出去。

老酒買賣利潤可以到三、四成，但黃智章說，面對的人形形色色，有時遇到道上「卒仔」聯手用幾瓶假酒坑你，身上現金太多還要擔心對方「臨時起意」，其實風險很高。（自由時報記者顏宏駿）

Vintage liquor dealer Huang Chih-chang poses with his liquor on June 28, 2010. PHOTO: YEN HONG-CHUN, LIBERTY TIMES

六月二十八日，從事老酒買賣的黃智章和他的老酒合影。

照片：自由時報記者顏宏駿攝

WARNING: Excessive consumption of alcohol can damage your health.

飲酒過量有害健康