

THE VOICE

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The professor of Wall Street

IF you dream about being a billionaire financier, of making a bundle on the money markets, you should listen to Alvin D Hall.

Hall, 43, is the archetypal self-made man whose skill at teaching financial wizardry has earned him the nickname 'Wall Street's Professor'.

Coming from a very poor rural background in Wakulla County, Florida, he broke free from his farming upbringing.

He was the eldest of seven children – and the only one who fought his way to prosperity.

"My folks are still there tending to the farm. But I knew at nine years old that I would not be spending my life on the farm.

"I loved reading and through books I realised that there was a much bigger world out there."

The young Alvin Hall found himself in an integrated school when Florida's schools were integrated in 1968.

Strength

He adds: "In the same year [President] Johnson introduced a programme called Project Upward Bound which gave poor kids a chance of a college education. I had good grades and so was accepted on to the project."

From there Hall went from strength to strength, graduating with a BA in English from Bowdoin College, Maine.

He followed the BA with an MA in American literature from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

After university he took a position as promotions and publications manager with North Carolina Public Television (NCPTV).

"While at NCPTV my ex-room

mate called me and said that he was going into business with his father's financial advice firm and wanted me to help him. He said that I was good at taking in information."

Till then he had had no experience of the financial world.

"I was one of those people who didn't even know how to balance his chequebook," he admits.

This was in May 1982. By December of that year he was on Wall Street.

"I was lucky in that in the early '80s, when I arrived on Wall Street, a lot of middle-level firms were starting up training schemes.

"Before this the way that you learned a job on Wall Street was to sit next to somebody who had done the job – probably for just six months before you got there – and pick it up from them.

Millions

"My job was to go out, interview people, read books and find out what exactly was involved in working the markets."

Now Hall will be sharing his wisdom with millions of viewers when a three-part series, *Alvin Hall's World of Money*, starts on BBC2 this Wednesday.

He is keen to explode some myths around investing in the stock market.

"The first bit of advice I would give is that you do not need to be rich. The second is that you are not going to make a fortune overnight.

"The best companies to invest in at first are long-term, stable businesses. You need to find companies that have grown steadily over a number of years.

"Most people who are interested in getting into the stock market think that they can make a fast buck. They think it's like the Lottery – they can



MONEY MAN: But Alvin Hall came from a poor background.

Alvin D Hall has a knack for making money. He tells Maurice McLeod how he does it

put in \$5 today and walk out with \$1,000 tomorrow.

Disappointing

"You don't want to cast your lot with flash in the pan companies because that's like a love affair. Great the first time but constantly disappointing after that."

In Britain, the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) has brought high returns for investors – the companies in it are younger, smaller and less stable.

Hall says: "I would not tell anybody who did not have a lot of experience to get involved in AIM. It is too much of a risk. You may as well put