

— JOHN GIBSON, Calgary Sun

D JIM Davies



AN EARTHQUAKE brought Ben Docktor to Calgary. And he's been shaking things up ever since. Slightly more than 20 years ago, Ben Docktor — the founder of Calgary's Race City Speedway and the CEO of the successful Platinum Group of Companies — was operating a wholesale food business in California.

"We'd had that company for four or five years and had really built it up," he recalls, as he sits back in a comfortable chair in his companies' head office on the seventh floor of a highrise at 333 11 Ave. S.W.

"Our warehouse was in Santa Rosa, California, right on top of the San Andreas Fault. Then an earthquake hit. A big one. It split the building in half and blew open the gas mains. There was a tremendous fire and the whole place burned to the ground. The insurance didn't cover very much. We were devastated financially. We lost everything. It was 'start over time.'"

Starting over was nothing new for Ben Docktor. He'd done it before successfully. And, he did it again. He moved his family to Calgary and in his first six months in this city, he "did extremely well. I got into the pipe business here and because there was a pipe shortage at the time, I made a lot of money. Since then, I've never looked back."

Today, at 52, Ben Docktor is a man who has it all. Home is a sprawling house with an indoor swimming pool, nestled on a 20-acre spread in the Rocky Mountain foothills. He and his wife, Diane, have two children — daughter Bobbie-Jo, 22, taking a doctorate in psychology at Stanford University, and son Ben Jr., 19, a third year student at the University of Calgary.

Ben's companies — including a structural steel operation and other companies involved in oil and gas — are doing well. And his dream of "giving something back to the community" has come true, with the building of the state-of-the-art motorsport facility in Southeast Calgary — Race City Speedway.

The words come easily when Ben discusses his success in the highly-competitive business world.

"There are no secrets in the business world," he says. "Some people go through life thinking they can fool the guy next door, the guy uptown or The Guy Upstairs. But you can't fool anyone for long. Everyone knows you for what you are. When you can feel like you've got good friends and that you've contributed to the community, you can stand tall."