

THE SPEED DOCKTOR

RACE CITY FOUNDER LIKES TO GO FIRST CLASS

When the day is done, what counts is how you stand with your community."

The journey to success has been, in his own words, "a rollercoaster ride" — with lots of ups and downs.

"Any businessman who tells you he's never seen everything hanging by a thread has never lived on the edge. You can't grow without debt, without risk. I've lived on the edge. But I don't live there anymore."

To understand Ben, you have to know his past. Born in McClusky, North Dakota, the son of a scrap dealer, he grew up following his father's belief in hard work.

As a boy, he worked in his dad's scrapyards and picked rocks on the family farm. As a student, he spent his days "dreaming of what I'd do when I was finished with school."

At the age of 17, he enlisted in the U.S. Army — a pleasant treat for this young man, since "the work wasn't as hard as it was at home."

He finished high school while in the army, took a

Dale Carnegie course that introduced him to the sales world, and after his three-year military stint, went to Wyoming, where he worked as a roughneck on the oil rigs.

That job cost Ben Docktor an eye.

"It was late at night and it was hot. I was giving one last hit on the rig with a hammer when I got hit by a piece of steel directly in my eyeball. The pain was phenomenal and I lost the sight in that eye."

Ben got a small cash settlement as a result of that accident and headed off on his first real business adventure, selling oil field equipment in Wyoming. He moved on to the pipe business and eventually formed a partnership with an older man, Kacik Phester. Together, they achieved success, branching out of the oil business to form a conglomerate which included a huge cattle-feeding operation, a sugar factory, a lumber company and a trucking business, running 200 trucks and trailers.

When his partner died, Ben moved on. He'd just met his wife and decided to wind down the company. That's when he moved to California and got involved with the food business which went up in smoke in an earthquake.

His wife's family connections led to the move to Calgary 20 years ago and from Day One in this city, success has smiled on Ben Docktor.

That success led to Ben's building Race City Speedway. He'd always loved racing cars. As a youngster, he drag-raced against all comers. As an adult, he raced cars throughout Western Canada and the U.S. and won the '89 super stock racing title, loving the "bumper to bumper, door handle to door handle" action.

Over the years, he's mellowed. He doesn't race competitively anymore. An admitted "hell-raiser" in his younger days, Ben says: "I put the bottle down 12 years ago and gave up smoking five years ago. Now, I just chew on a cigar. I don't light it."

But he did light up the lives of motorsport fans since the mid-'80s by creating Race City Speedway.

"When I built it, it was a hobby. I'd been blessed financially and I wanted to give something back to the community. Calgary is one of the best-run cities anywhere. Calgarians are the best. It's a great place

