

City firm drums up success



Privately held companies play a vital role in Calgary's economy. To draw attention to their contributions, Arthur Andersen, an international professional services firm, and the Calgary Sun recognize the top private companies in our city through the Calgary Private 100.

There is nothing glamorous about a 45 gallon drum — even less so if the barrel is used, scarred and in need or repair. But don't tell Nils Bodtker that. He's built a hugely successful business based on filling a growing need for these ubiquitous containers. Bodtker's company, Great Western

THE CALGARY SUN **100** CALGARY PRIVATE ARTHUR ANDERSEN

Great Western Containers Inc.

- * Founded in 1979
- * Employs 140 people
- * Revenue exceeds \$22 million

NILS BODTKER
President

Containers Inc., recovers, repairs and manufactures thousands of barrels in plants located in Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver. Today, Great Western is the largest company of its kind in Western Canada. Bodtker and his wife, Sylvia, purchased E&E Containers in 1979, which had 12 employees and annual revenue of \$150,000. In 1983, a second plant was established in Nisku. The following year the Calgary

plant moved to a new location and began distributing Poly Drums. In 1990, Great Western purchased Vulcan Steel, which had plants in Edmonton, Winnipeg and Regina, and assumed that firm's distribution of pails and packaging cans. By now, the company's revenue had reached \$9.5 million.

In 1991, Great Western acquired a Vancouver warehouse and added another distribution line. Two years later, the Vancouver plant expanded again, adding another product line of Poly Bottles. Then, on the firm's 15th anniversary, Great Western purchased Nampac Steel of Edmonton. Today, Great Western has more than 140 employees and annual revenue of more than \$22 million.

The company is a family business. Nils and Sylvia are still heavily involved, while son Brent, daughter Britta, and daughter-in-law Fiona make up the head office staff. Bodtker, who hails from Baie Comeau, Que., attributes his company's success to "making the customer king" and rewarding the efforts of employees. In his spare time, Bodtker volunteers as an account executive for the United Way and pursues his passion for golf, skiing and tennis.

