

## **Clark Truck Parts Looks to China Feb 20th 1999**

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Putnam firm's success attracts attention, visit from Rockefeller.

By Lee Ann Welch, The Putnam Herald

BANCROFT - To some the Clark Truck Parts on West Virginia 62 between Bancroft and Poca may look like a military installation. Without knowing about the 37-year-old company and judging from the outside, that's understandable.



What Jack Clark began with some trucks, parts and a few dollars has turned into a multinational venture that customizes equipment and sends all-terrain trucks to such destinations as Costa Rica, Australia, Kenya and Thailand.

Eric Clark, Vice President of Clark Truck Parts, shows U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller a former military vehicle that is being converted into a fire truck. The truck will eventually be sent to Costa Rica.

Hopefully, the company will soon add China to that list, said Eric Clark, vice president of the company. In January, Clark visited Tianjin, China, as part of Project Harvest, an undertaking spearheaded by U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., which takes West Virginia business leaders abroad to develop economic leads.

Rockefeller visited Clark Truck Parts Tuesday to see first-hand a prototype fire truck the company is building for the city of Tianjin. Clark said in a few months officials from China will be at the shop to take a look at the completed truck.

If the city purchases a fleet of between 80 and 100 trucks, Clark said his company will need to hire up to a dozen new employees to meet the order.

"This is the first time our company singled out a market and went to it," Clark said. "And we've never made a demonstration model."

The trucks will be mobile fire hydrants to provide fire suppression service to the city of 11 million people, said Chuan Liu Ni, Tianjin's business representative in the United States.

"There is insufficient infrastructure, especially in the rural areas," Chuan said.

Some larger cities have water lines, but are not equipped to fight fires, and the rural areas—under 500,000 people—generally have no water lines, Chuan said.

In selling products such as large trucks, Chuan said there is a ready-made market. "Many West Virginia companies are selling to China, and the state has strong advocates (in

China)," Chuan said.

Rockefeller said his office did not seek out Clark Truck Parts to take on Project Harvest. It was Eric Clark's initiative.

"It was a risk for him, but he believed there may be a market," Rockefeller said.

If that instinct proves true, Rockefeller said, Clark Truck Parts may be a 40 to 80 percent increase in business.

Clark Truck Parts produces durable all-wheel drive trucks and parts. The company supplies a variety of trucks including dump trucks, cargo trucks, long-wheel base trucks and tractor trucks.