

Wherever a big hole needs digging

Heavy metal products which have been manufactured here in Langley are hard at work all around the world

AL IRWIN
Times Reporter

Earl Hirtz, a manufacturer of heavy equipment attachments, is philosophical about the current economic situation.

“Business is down a lot. It is just a brutal market right now.”

But he quickly adds: “Markets go up and down. When it turns around, people are going to need our products again.”

And, in fact, although many of the world’s natural resource sectors are taking a beating, “the (Alberta) oil sands are still quite active.”

Hirtz’s firm, CWS Industries (Mfg) Corp. has just last week shipped off to the oil sands a huge bucket built at its Port Kells plant at 19490 92 Ave.

“It’s a whopper,” Hirtz says of the bucket which measures about 14 feet in height, and about 20 feet in width.

The bucket, sent out last week on a special, low-slung, over-width trailer, which had to be accompanied by a pilot car, is already at work in the Alberta tar sands.

This bucket weighs 56,000 lbs. empty, has capacity to scoop up 29 cubic yards in one sweep, and is designed to load 400-tonne trucks and the mining pits.

“The customers love it,” he says.

Hirtz says his father was in the contracting business, so he grew up around machinery, and became a welder.

It was a good wage to pay his tuition with, and he studied for an engineering degree at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, then earned a second degree, in business, at Simon Fraser University. Hirtz, the president of CWS, has a number of partners, who had begun looking for a good company to invest in.

In 2003 the partners found what



“People are not buying yet ... but they are getting ready.”

Earl Hirtz
president, CWS

CWS industries president Earl Hirtz stands inside a 5300 bucket hand made at the CWS plant in Langley. The bucket is destined for the tar sands in northern Alberta.

John GORDON/Langley Times

they were looking for in CWS, a metal fabricating, and manufacturing company that was established in the Lower Mainland in 1963.

The products are virtually any-

thing that fits on the front or back of heavy machinery, buckets, blades, rippers, grapples.

The applications vary widely, mining, oil and gas, forestry, con-

struction and even agriculture.

“We do complete conversions ... take an excavator, and turn it into a logging machine.”

CWS will construct heavy duty

cabs for equipment, especially designed and built to be safe in the dangerous environments of

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business

FOOD DRIVE FUN



Natasha JONES/Langley Times

Walnut Grove's Curves Fitness members and staff collected more than 3,000 pounds of food in March to replenish Langley Food Bank supplies. Flexing their muscles before the food was taken to the bank were, from left: Walnut Grove's Curves manager Jenny Waddington, Mirella Mykle, who owns both this and the Langley City Curves, Margarete Kissler, June Tribe, Hanna Kowalczyk and Janet Cloake.

CWS casting its glance overseas

Alternatives being sought to 'dead' U.S. market

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the forest industry.

The staff range from engineers, machinists, metal fabricators and welders, mechanics and sales. Hydraulics are a big part of the company's work, particularly for forestry accessories.

"Lots of products require complex, moving parts."

In peak times, staff can range as high as 200, and CWS has another outlet in Edmonton.

The Edmonton site is doing somewhat better, and Hirtz says the U.S. market, traditionally a big one for CWS, "is dead right now."

But the overseas market is being pursued, and is increasing as a larger percentage of the market.

"Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, any-

where they are digging a big hole," he says.

And in Canada, "not all mining is dead.

"Coal is doing quite well. Gold is up, potash is doing well."

And the oil sands remain active, and will continue to, he predicts.

"Hundreds of millions of dollars are invested (there).

"They are not going to walk away from that."

And he says that while sales have not yet begun as a result of the federal government's infrastructure and economic stimulus grants, inquiries are being made for quotes on equipment.

"People are not buying yet . . . but they are getting ready."

For more information, go to www.cwsindustries.com.