

BIG IRON EQUIPMENT, INC.



NAME: Zachary Mykisen

TITLE: Sales manager

COMPANY: Big Iron Equipment, Inc.

LOCATION: Plover, Wisconsin

HOMETOWN: Bancroft, Wisconsin

TIME IN PRESENT POSITION: 8 years

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT: Mykisen & Sons Trucking

SCHOOLING: Almond-Bancroft High School and Nicolet Technical College

ACTIVITIES/ORGANIZATIONS: Bancroft Lions Club and past WPVGA Associate Division Board member

FAMILY: Wife, Amy, daughter, Delaney, and twin boys, Vince and Brice

HOBBIES: Farming, ice fishing and hunting

8 BC'T February

INTERVIEW

ZACHARY MYKISEN, sales manager, Big Iron Equipment, Inc.

By Joe Kertzman, managing editor, *Badger Common'Tater*

Specializing in implements for the potato farmer, Big Iron Equipment handles new and used agricultural lines for everything from seeding and tillage to grain and livestock handling.

Established by Bill and Dianne Zelinski in November of 1995, they purchased a Spudnik dealership located on Maple Drive in Plover, Wisconsin, and have been operating out of that building ever since.

The Zelinskis began by selling only three lines of equipment: Spudnik, Lenco and Thomas.

"During the November 1, 1995, opening there were only three employees," notes Zach Mykisen, sales manager for the company. "Now Big Iron has 11 employees and more than 15 lines of equipment."

Big Iron Equipment offers sales, service and a well-stocked parts department for all of the company's lines, plus Noffsinger and Broekema chains, sprockets, bearings, rollers and steel stock.

The company stocks hydraulic hoses and fittings, and carries a large selection of clean, used equipment.

One specialty is cryogenic tempering of metal to prolong its life, provide stress release and stabilization and prevent breakage, all of which helps save maintenance expenses and reduces downtime and waste.

The Big Iron Equipment crew can service and repair tools and machinery, along with making modifications to existing setups.

Zach, would you consider Big Iron an implement dealer, a farm machinery dealer, or how do you like to refer to the business? Big Iron is a farm equipment dealership that has a large, well-stocked parts department and an experienced service and fabrication staff.

Above: Zach Mykisen, sales manager for Big Iron Equipment in Plover, Wisconsin, poses in front of potato bins during a farm tour. The tour was part of a 2019 Spudnik Equipment Company/Grimme Group trip in Germany.



Is it still a family business or have the feel of one? I would say it is still very much a family business.

What is your position with the company, and how has it changed over the years? My current position is in sales. When I started, in 2012, I shadowed Bill by learning about the equipment.

Over the years, I have learned a lot and can now call on customers, but the equipment advances and changes every day, so you never stop learning.

I believe Big Iron Equipment handles Lenco, Spudnik, Grimme, Salford, Wil-Rich, Wishek Manufacturing, Great Plains, Demco, Versatile,

FAE, Norwest Tillage and Ashland earthmoving equipment, correct? And am I missing any companies?

We have recently become a dealer for LS Tractors and Forax. LS tractors supply tractors from 22 horsepower [HP] up to 101 HP. They have over 40 years of tractor manufacturing experience, and we are excited about this new business venture.

Forax specializes in brush-cutting attachment equipment, and we are the exclusive dealer in the United States. Big Iron Equipment also offers forestry mulching.

We are also a manufacturer for custom conveyors and stock a variety

Above: A new 6160 Spudnik six-row windrower is used in harvesting Creamer potatoes for The Little Potato Company on Sigourney Farms of Coloma, Wisconsin.

of vendors' sprockets, belting, chain, bearings, hydraulic hoses and fittings, rollers and steel.

Do you carry more inventory of certain manufacturers than others, and if so, what are your biggest sellers and why? From a whole goods perspective, we don't really stock one line more than the other, but from a parts perspective, we stock more Lenco and Spudnik parts due to the number of units in the area.

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We want to ensure that we can meet the farmers' demands during planting and harvest with our stock.

What type of equipment do you specialize in (i.e. harvesters, planters, tillage, etc.) We specialize in all equipment needed to grow various crops from start to finish, such as tillage, planting, hilling, spraying, fertilizing, harvesting, storing and transporting.

What does Big Iron Equipment specialize in that other implement dealers don't? What sets the company apart? I would say our

experienced employees set us apart in custom fabrication and hydraulic repair, and we have a knowledgeable parts department.

Who are your main customers (potato and vegetable farmers, other farmers, other business owners) and where are most located? Our main customers are potato and vegetable growers mainly located in Wisconsin, Michigan and Illinois. We also do business with a wide variety of specialty farmers.

How big a role does service play after the sale? Explain. Service gets

Above: Lenco harvesters sold and serviced by Big Iron Equipment are lined up at Wysocki Produce Farm in Bancroft, Wisconsin.

you the sale. Without a great service department behind the equipment, there is a reluctance to purchase.

How has the business changed since you've been there? I feel like we have expanded. We have taken on more lines of equipment and new customers, and we've recently expanded our Spudnik sales territory and will be taking on the dealership in Michigan.

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Bill Zelinski, owner of Big Iron Equipment, sits at his desk, and the original parts counter is shown, both circa 1995.

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Above: Potato planting season at Bula-Gieringer Farms in Coloma, Wisconsin, involves, from left to right, a Spudnik crop cart and planter, and Demco saddle tanks (all sold by Big Iron Equipment), the latter on a John Deere tractor.

Left: (L-R) are Zach Mykisen of Big Iron Equipment, Byron Duffin (Spudnik) and Adam Flyte, Flyte Family Farms, in Denmark during a Spudnik trip.

Is there more of an emphasis on technology, sustainability, service, speed and electronics? Technology is driving the industry. Consumers are always looking for the most efficient way to get the crop in and out of the ground.

Machinery must keep up with the ever-changing advances in GPS (global positioning system), yield monitoring and product updates.

Do you try to help with setup in the field? Explain. Every piece of new equipment is delivered to our shop, put together and run. Bill, I or a service technician is always in the field when the farmer starts using that new piece of equipment to make sure it functions as promised.

Do you spend a lot of your days in the field or delivering equipment, or what is your main role? Most days

during planting and harvest are spent in the fields checking on or helping repair equipment.

After harvest and up until planting, I am trying to sell for the upcoming year. Winter is also a big time for tradeshow, so there is a lot of travel in those months.

What equipment did you guys showcase at the Industry Show



Above: Hugo (left) and Chris Poole (right) of Spudnik watch with Zach Mykisen (center) and Bryan Bula as a new Spudnik Airsep harvester is started up on Gary Bula Farms.

Left: Early morning potato harvest in Wisconsin found a Lenco harvester picking up potatoes behind two Spudnik windrowers, the machinery sold and serviced by Big Iron Equipment.



in Stevens Point and why? We showcased a 22-foot Spudnik Bulk Bed inside the show, mainly because we split the booth with Mid-State Truck, and it works well to show the bed mounted on one of their trucks.

Outside, we showcased various tillage equipment and fertilizer spreaders.

What are you most proud of regarding Big Iron Equipment and

your role? Being able to sell Spudnik and Lenco equipment, which are top quality brands in the potato industry. Spudnik is the leader in innovation, and we are proud to represent them in the Upper Midwest.

How do you see the business evolving or changing in years to come? Hopefully, the industry stays strong and we can continue to expand and service this area for years

Above: A new 6160 Spudnik six-row windrower digs up potatoes on Wysocki Produce Farm.

to come. I see bigger equipment in the future with more elaborate technology.

What are your goals with the company? Success. Keep selling and striving to be a leading resource in the potato/agriculture industry. **BCT**



Above: Zach Mykisen of Big Iron Equipment checks out a healthy field of soybeans.

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