



INTERVIEW

MARK RICE,

president, McGowan Rice Construction

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

NAME: Mark Rice

TITLE: President

COMPANY: McGowan Rice Construction

LOCATION: Boise, ID

HOMETOWN: Boise, ID

YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION:

Three years

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT:

Hansen-Rice Construction

SCHOOLING: Bachelor of Arts degree,

Whitworth University

FAMILY: Wife, Jennifer, and kids, Caleb (17) and Charlotte (13)

HOBBIES: Spending time with family, traveling, and golf

Above: McGowan Rice Construction President Mark Rice poses in front of the Wisconsin Certified Seed Potatoes booth during the Potato Association of America (PAA) Annual Meeting, July 27-31, 2025, in Madison, Wisconsin. Rice gave a presentation on potato storage structures, design and engineering during a Storage Symposium at the PAA Annual Meeting.

Overseeing all steps of the building process, McGowan Rice Construction is known to farmers across the United States and in Canada for its agricultural buildings, potato and produce storages, food processing plants, warehouse facilities and other commercial structures.

Owners Mark Rice and Brady McGowan, who have more than 30 years of combined experience in agriculture and agri-business construction, wanted to take ownership of their products and the pride that comes along with building long-term builder-client relationships.

McGowan and Rice proposed to parent company Hansen-Rice Construction that they spin off an agriculture-focused business. It made sense, and McGowan Rice Construction was born.

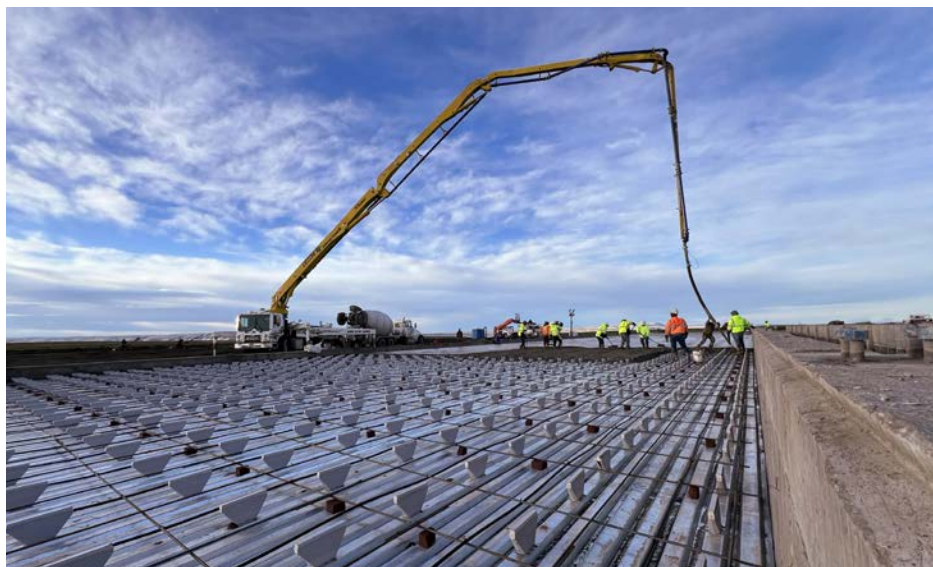
A full-service design/build firm working primarily in agricultural and industrial buildings, the McGowan Rice team takes a no-nonsense approach to building and refuses

Above: The Air Envelope is McGowan Rice Construction's standard high-quality potato storage design and a great tool for reducing the risk of free moisture in the environment.

to compromise on strong ethics, accountability, safety and efficiency.

Company President Mark Rice says, in short, the construction company is focused on quality, cost and timeliness, believing that none of these things must be compromised for the other.

Services include front-end planning, pre-construction, design, general contracting, maintenance, and tenant improvements and remodels.



Mark, what is your background, and how did you initially get into the construction industry, particularly working with agricultural and potato storage buildings? My father, Ivan, and Dan Hansen founded Hansen-Rice in 1983, so I have been around construction and the potato industry

basically my whole life.

I worked on my first potato storage when I turned 18, back in 1997, and continued to work construction throughout college summers.

After college, I lived in Seattle for about 10 years doing various

Above: The aptly named “Air Everywhere Air Floor” (first image) features evenly spaced ventilation to keep air flowing through potato piles, ultimately controlling temperature and humidity. In-floor pipe-and-cup floors (second photo) make up another popular air floor option.

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Contact: Jim or John

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professional jobs and then moved back home in 2010 to work for Hansen-Rice in a business development capacity. I gravitated immediately to potatoes and just fell in love with the people and ag industry.

At one point you were working for Hansen-Rice Construction, and then I believe you and Brady McGowan took on the agricultural portion of the construction business, forming McGowan Rice Construction.

Is that correct, and are you still affiliated with Hansen-Rice? Correct, McGowan Rice Construction is really a spin-off that allowed us to have an agriculture-focused business.

Hansen-Rice has grown to become a large business, and Brady and I presented the opportunity to start



a business unit focused on the ag industry. It made sense and my brother, John, and Burke Hansen are partners in McGowan Rice as well.

How did you and Brady meet, and how's business? Brady started working for Hansen-Rice as a project

Above: An arch wall potato storage building is a common tried-and-true facility design.

manager right after college when he moved to Idaho from Maine over 20 years ago.

We worked together on many potato storage projects and our skillsets and values were aligned where we thought we could run a successful business together. Brady and I have worked together to complete many successful storage projects from Maine to Washington.

What percentage of the business is agriculture, and potato storage facilities in general? In any given year, it is probably around 80% or so of the business. The potato market has its ups and downs and so we make sure to have some diversity in markets.

What are the main challenges with properly constructing potato storage buildings, and how have you been able to meet those challenges?

A few of the main challenges to properly constructing potato storage buildings are managing the rugged environment that is required to properly store potatoes with a high moisture environment and maintaining very specific ventilation and temperature requirements.

In addition, potato storage facilities



This bird's-eye view of an Okray Family Farms potato storage plant built by McGowan Rice Construction illustrates a work aisle Air Envelope facility design.

are often built in cold environments where you can't start construction until approximately April and the project must be completed by September for harvest, so meeting a schedule is critical.

Early planning and development go a long way in helping to build a successful project and completing it on time.

What does McGowan Rice do right regarding potato and vegetable storage buildings that you take pride in? We take critical care to make sure our storages reduce the opportunity for free moisture inside the potato storage bins.

While we build a variety of storage facilities, the Hansen-Rice Air Envelope is a well-known design that is a great tool for reducing the risk of free moisture in the storage environment.

It seems like potato storage buildings must combine design precision

"I gravitated immediately to potatoes and just fell in love with the people and ag industry."

– Mark Rice

with refrigeration, ventilation, and temperature control, with that technology constantly evolving.

Give me some comments on what McGowan Rice offers that can help growers maintain a quality crop.

Correct, technology is constantly evolving, and our growers can get very detailed information on the storage environment and the quality of the potatoes in storage.

We really try and emphasize that we will work together with the grower and ventilation contractor to make

sure we are flexible in our design to meet the capacity, ventilation, and refrigeration requirements for a specific project.

Are there areas that McGowan Rice Construction specializes in regarding potato and vegetable storage that other companies don't? Explain.

Yes, we have a unique Air Envelope with a complete open-web air cavity system that has been considered the premium model for over 30 years.

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With this design, we can ensure constant air movement in the cavity to reduce thermal drive moving to the storage area. We also have a very experienced design team that

is ultimately familiar with multiple storage configurations.

What suppliers do you work with that you'd like to mention

Above: Mark Rice says that McGowan Rice Construction was proud to help create the potato storage display at the Food + Farm Exploration Center in Plover, Wisconsin.

as offering quality products, and what do they supply for you? We work with a variety of suppliers and contractors throughout the country in the ag industry. In the Wisconsin area, we have worked consistently over the years with both Nelson's Vegetable Storage Systems and Ron's Refrigeration & Air Conditioning, as well as with Altmann Construction and many others.

What areas of the country does McGowan Rice Construction serve, and is it difficult dealing with logistics? We take pride in working throughout the country from Maine to California and everywhere in between. We have worked in Canada and Mexico, but since COVID, we haven't been back yet. We are still talking with Canadian growers, and

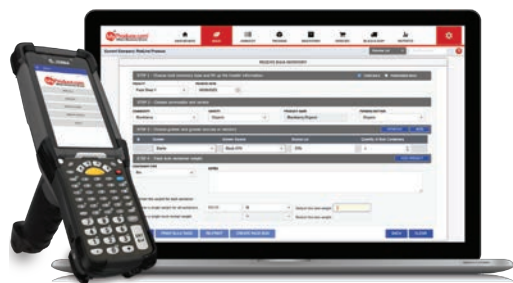
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there may be an opportunity in the future.

There are some challenges with working all over the country, but it is what we are used to dealing with, and we have a great network of partners and suppliers throughout the country to make sure we can execute a project on schedule.

Do you enjoy working with growers in different states, and if so, what do you like about the agriculture industry? Yes, we have great clients throughout all the potato growing areas. What we really enjoy about the ag industry is that you feel a sense of family and pride in growers' work on a farm.

From ownership to employees, people take pride in their work and care about what goes on at the farm.

What are the top pieces of advice you can give potato and vegetable




growers about taking a crop from the field into storage to ensure quality produce comes out of storage? A potato never improves its quality in storage. "Quality in" gives you a chance for "quality out."

Harvest conditions are rarely perfect but managing harvest temperatures

Above: With many growers raising small potatoes for The Little Potato Company and RPE, Inc., box storage has become more popular in recent years.

and potato pulp temperatures around 60 degrees is a key piece to starting off successful in storage. With that,

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proper consistent building and ventilation maintenance helps with storage performance.

Do you suggest crop protection products to growers, or storage best practices, and what are some of them? We do not offer crop protection products, and most of the storage “best practices” are managed between the ventilation vendor and the grower.

I’ve been told that fewer growers are building new storage facilities and more want to remodel existing buildings. Is that true, and if so, why? While we are still building new storage facilities, the costs have been quite high over the past 4-5 years, so we have been participating in many remodels to help expand the life of existing buildings.

What does a typical remodeling job for a potato and/or vegetable grower involve? It typically has been fixing roof, wall and insulation issues. We have also worked on adding new fan houses and air plenums to existing buildings.



Golfing for the McGowan Rice Construction team at the 2024 Putt-Tato Open are, from left to right, Jake Schwartzman, Mark Rice, Brad Knights, and Chris Dunn.

Mark, are you personally still working in the field, and what were or are your own specialties in that area? No, while always making sure I am aware of the project progress and working with our management and site crews, I have other responsibilities that don’t allow me to get too dirty.

Once a project is developed,

I stay very close to the day-to-day operations throughout the completion of the job.

How important is service after the sale, and how often do you find yourself back at storage facilities?

This is critical and we take pride in our repeat work. That only happens if you answer phone calls from your clients when they have challenges.



With materials costs having risen over the past 4-5 years, McGowan Rice Construction has been participating in many remodels to help expand the life of existing potato storage buildings. Among other things, remodeling existing storage facilities can increase air flow with plenum and fan house expansions and modifications.



McGowan Rice performs a variety of maintenance projects.

What do you see as the future of McGowan Rice Construction?

We want to continue growing our business throughout the industry and working with great clients

across the country.

Is there anything I've missed that you'd like to add?

We have some wonderful friends and clients throughout Wisconsin, and it has been a pleasure working here. **BCT**



Left: This interior shot of a potato storage building shows the floor flume used for floating potatoes into the facility.

Right: Mark Rice gives his presentation "Storage Structures: Potato Storage Design and Engineering" during the Potato Association of America Annual Meeting, July 27-31, 2025, in Madison, Wisconsin.


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