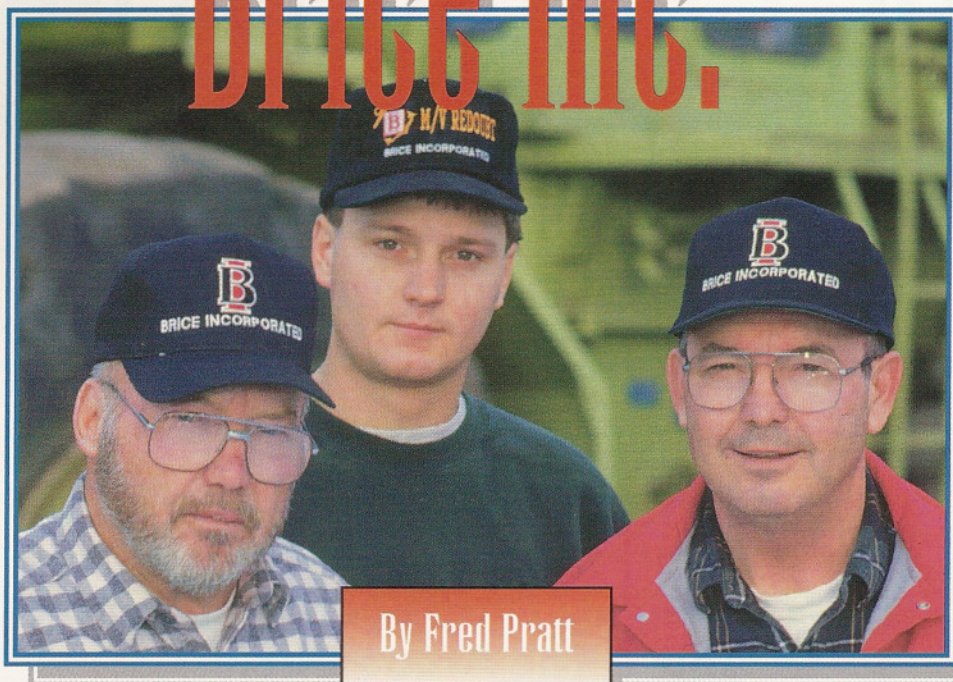


Brice Inc.



By Fred Pratt

Andy,
Luther &
Al Brice

Standing before a large map of Alaska in the offices of Brice Inc., a visitor quickly grasps one thing in common about all the red flags that mark the company's jobs.

None of the red flags is on a road. Some of them are in places that don't even have good water access. One community, Allakaket, only has an airport because Brice came in and rebuilt it in a race against Arctic winter last fall.

Brice Inc. is a uniquely Alaskan company, a team that works mostly in rural Alaska because it has the equipment and experience to go into the farthest corners of the state, keep its equipment running, train a local workforce and finish a job.

The company can handle its own mobilization, transportation and maintenance to function self-sufficiently almost anywhere. It thrives on tight time schedules, emergency work and the pressure of clearing rights-of-way for huge projects without delays.

The Brice family came to Alaska before Statehood, and when people talk about the changes since then, a Brice can often tell you how he cleared the way.

Asked about an aging bulldozer sitting in the yard minus its running gear, Sam Richard Brice explains that it's about to go to that great yellow scrap iron graveyard in the sky. "That's one of the two Cats that started the trans-Alaska pipeline," he points out, recounting the route pushed north from Liven-good to the Yukon River. He was on one of them.

Brice had a major hand in building or upgrading more than 40 airports outside the road system, and it's also left its mark as roads, power lines, harbors and docks.

The family-owned firm built the breakwater for a new port on St. George, in the Pribilof Islands and built a new runway at Shishmaref using an experimental design involving a foundation of sand compacted into a honeycomb grid.

"They're basically logistical jobs, getting the right people, the right equipment, there at the right time," Sam Richard Brice explains.

Four Brice brothers worked for the company when it was formed with their parents in 1961, and the same four are still there.

"My brother Al came up to work on the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line around 1958, then we all came up after that," Sam Brice recounts. The company began with a sub-contract clearing rights-of-way, but it's first big job was on the airport in Norvik in 1964.

Brice Inc. cleared much of the route of the trans-Alaska pipeline, and survived the lean years that followed the pipeline boom. Through those years the company was run by their mother, Helinka McNutt Brice, mother of the Brice sons. She was president and chief executive officer until her death in 1992 at the age of 83.

Helinka Brice was also a major contributor to performing
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arts programs in Fairbanks and a considerable power within the Democratic Party. A matriarch to more than her seven children and their families, she issued orders to governors, senators and newspaper editors the same way she did with the operators and oilers on her payroll. The company still keeps her name on a parking place outside its office building.

After her death Andy M. Brice took over the title of president of the corporation and general superintendent, while his brother Luther Alba Brice is vice president and Sam Richard Brice

is secretary/treasurer. The fourth brother, Thomas Liston Brice, runs the land clearing operation on which the company was built 33 years ago.

The first representative of the next generation, Sam Robert Brice, is also a corporation vice president. "That generation talks to the computers better than we do," explains the elder Sam Brice, whose tidy corner office contains nothing more complex than a television set.

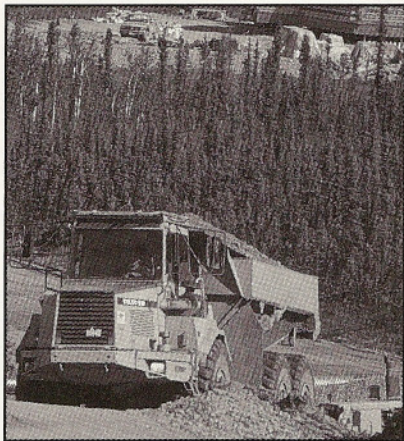
Another member of the third Brice generation, Tom Brice, currently represents Fairbanks in the Alaska House of Representatives.

The Brice brothers don't seek a lot of public attention or publicity. They're modest about everything except their reputation in the industry as a company that gets things done in the toughest conditions in Alaska. Those talents were shown clearly in two recent major projects.

Redoubt Volcano erupted Dec. 14, 1989, beginning a four-month cycle of eruptions that brought glacial melting and flooding that closed the Cook Inlet Pipe Line Company's oil terminal at Drift River. The company hired Brice to

get it back into production.

Brice barged a 100-man camp and equipment to the site in early 1990, then built an 8,300-foot dike around the terminal armored with articulating concrete block mats that were poured in place.



Allakaket, Alaska, 1995

About 200,000 cubic yards of silt had to be removed from the site, and 300,000 cubic yards of material had to be mined for the dike construction. In 60 days the job was two-thirds done and the brand new terminal was approved for operations.

The Drift River project was named by the national Society of Professional Engineers as one of the nine Outstanding Engineering Achievements constructed in the United States during 1990.

Allakaket-Alatna Reconstruction

was the most recent challenge met and conquered by Brice after the Koyukuk River flood in September 1994. The villages were effectively destroyed and their populations were evacuated to Fairbanks as winter approached. Brice went into Allakaket the afternoon of the day they were called in by the state, finding an airport open to only light aircraft and a village with all its equipment under water.

In about a week they had the town's equipment running and the runway repaired so that C-130 aircraft could operate there. After a month of working in temperatures that fell steadily to below zero, Brice gave Allakaket a 4,000-foot lighted runway and an expanded apron area.

That allowed the villages to be rebuilt by this summer. The work there also shows the fickle nature of mobilizing in Alaska. Brice was unable to get its barges up the formerly flooded but nor-

mally shallow Koyukuk River this fall, which doesn't allow large barge traffic even in most good years, so its equipment is stranded.

Brice has a reputation for owning huge fleets of exotic all-terrain vehicles, bulldozers, barges and heavy equipment, but the Brices say that's a public perception based more on activity than inventory.

"We're sort of like Rommel, we move it around so quickly people think we have more than we do," Sam Richard Brice explains. The company's yard off Van Horn Road in Fairbanks attests to that, with most of the fabled fleet out on jobs.

But unlike Rommel, the Brices have an effective air force and navy. The company owns ocean-going and river barges and tugs, as well as two airplanes. Pilot Gordon Clark carries mechanics, tools and parts wherever they're needed, and quite often they land on an airport that Brice built.

Brice still runs "Cat trains" across Alaska to remote jobs, but it's not an old fashioned company. It built its reputation in land clearing, but it also does extensive revegetation jobs. Brice has a subsidiary doing environmental clean-up work.

Another reputation the Brice's enjoy is for training and hiring rural Alaskans on their jobs. "We enjoy working out there, the nicest people you'll ever meet are out there in the Bush," Sam Richard Brice says. "This is their country, and it's important to remember that."

They don't bother making grand predictions about the future of their industry.

"One thing I've found in over 30 years in this business is that 60 days is forever," Sam Richard Brice says. "We have enough hold-over now to keep us busy next year, which is unusual. We say we've been doing this for 33 years, and we'll probably be doing it for 34."