

# BILL PECK

... A PASSION FOR METAL

BY JANE K. SCHOTT

By now any God fearing Texan has seen Daniel Day-Lewis in his Oscar award winning performance as an oilman in "There Will Be Blood". It was a man's world, a bit romantic, and it seemed so long ago.

Well, there are still men who lived the life of oil wells and adventure among us. One such man is Bill Peck, who traveled every summer as a boy with his hard drinking father around Mexico, Texas, and South America, working in the oil fields.

Bill has bright blue eyes that sparkle under a mop of handsome gray hair. His hands are strong and very expressive, and he is right in your face about what

is on his mind and intently wants to know what you think. He will tell you all about the journey of his life and keep you captivated for hours.

With a degree in business from UT and too many crazy years in the family business, Bill sold it all in the early 80s and took the road toward a more artistic life and began working in metal. He sold sculptures and toys that he designed and made at various art shows around Houston, and it was there that he began to admire the work of great metal-smiths, which pushed him to enroll in classes at The Art League.

He learned about designs, materials and techniques from David Stone, Joe Wells, and Albert Paley, great masters who can design a piece of fine jewelry, a glass dome, or a major installation at The Wortham Center. Bill's love of mechanics, history and decoratives have forged (no pun intended), his business into one of the best places in Houston to have ironwork designed and crafted.

Tucked away off Montrose, Peck & Company has a team of 20 professionals who can copy, repair or take an idea and fabricate it. You find a fabulous lantern in France and you need four more of them for a custom home...Bill can do it. Do you need to restore antique woven garden furniture to its previous luster, AND make it more durable? Bill can do it.

Any designer wants to create elements for each job using their own creative ideas and signature details. Bill can transform a designer's concept into a solid form. As the materials of 20th-century art and design become more unwieldy and industrial, talented fabricators, who can translate ideas from paper to real dimensions without losing the integrity of the piece, are highly sought.

Peck works with some of the best designers in town. The staff is very careful to never disturb the patina on any piece of iron that comes into the shop.

The finishing department learns from all the projects that come in the door, whether it's 8 chandeliers 20 feet in size, custom decorative hardware for the beams of a great room, or making a one-of-a-kind light fixture from a glass cloche. And they do it the old fashioned way. This age-old art has not changed in centuries. You still heat the metal, pound it, bend it and shape it. The only difference today is that you use better energy systems than coal to control the flame.

Peck & Company has one of the most extensive libraries filled with drawings and historical archival books on iron in Texas. His back yard is filled with antique architectural samples of ironwork from all over the world and from every century. You can find a French banister and he will have his craftsman design it for your site, draw it on paper, hand forge it, add a patina, and have it ready by your deadline.

Walking through his workshop you can see anvils that are over 100 years old and sitting on the original tree trunk. Hammers, claw bars and huge files are everywhere. Bill prides himself on hiring people who can read a calendar and get things out on time. A designer's dream!

So take a walk on the wild side and have a look around Bill Peck's backyard some morning...you will be inspired!

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