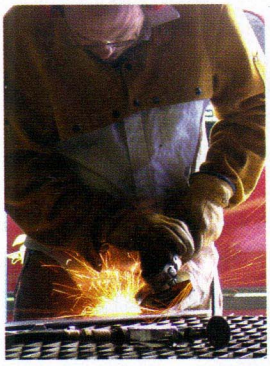
BY JEFF WOOTEN

Unique Signage: ***Acme Industrial Thinking***

Bob & Jen Rhea: It Takes Two to Create **One-of-a-kind Signs**



On page 28, we covered the one-of-a-kind signs being designed and built by Bob and Jen Rhea, owners of Acme Industrial Thinking in Cookeville, Tennessee. But the story as to how they got involved in this industry is just as inspiring as the projects they've been working on.

The artistic successes of Acme Industrial Thinking can probably be traced back to the couple's background.

Bob and Jen took courses in art, graphic design, engineering, and photography in college and parlayed that into art-related careers. They later bought an existing café in Asheville, North Carolina, remodeled it themselves, and even created the interior and exterior signs and fixtures for it (which is how Acme was eventually spun off).

Acme's success led them to close down the cafe and expand the studio to its full-time operation. Four years later, they made the move to Tennessee to be near family and tap into the busy Nashville market.

A two-person shop, the Rheas are committed to getting the job done, no matter the hours. "Although we always shoot for the quickest possible turn-around on projects, we're careful to manage our clients' expectations," says Bob. "We usually become fairly close with our clients and try to keep a line of communication going throughout the entire process."

With her photography background, Jen takes photos along the way for marketing purposes—and to keep clients abreast of progress. "It keeps them excited about the project while they wait," explains Bob.

Bob remarks that it's really hard for the couple to create plain, basic signage. "Art is in our genes," he says. "We rarely do the same thing twice, which keeps things challenging but fresh.

"The big payoff is seeing the clients' faces when they realize that they'll never see another sign like theirs!" SBI

At Acme Industrial Thinking, you won't find run-of-the-mill designs.

Bob & Jen Rhea are a picture-perfect example of the success small sign shops can enjoy.