

SMALL BUSINESS: **PETER BOCHENEK & ASSOCIATES**



Gay Enright and Peter Bochenek show off a garden they designed about 10 years ago.

Chapel Hill duo design gardens to help people express 'inner needs'

By Dale Gibson
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CHAPEL HILL — Ask a writer — a highly accomplished one at that — for a review of work done by a contractor, and you get a flowing answer.

"The landscape I had dreamt of but not been able to articulate, he had somehow divined" is the way Tim Crouse, author of "The Boys on the Bus," a landmark book about media coverage of the 1972 presidential campaign, described the work of Peter Bochenek (the "c" is silent) in fashioning a raw and rugged acre of land in Chapel Hill to his liking.

Bochenek and his partner of 15 years, Gay Enright, make up the landscape design team that is Peter Bochenek & Associates Inc. Like many people fed up with growth issues, crime and taxes in California, they relocated to Chapel Hill in 1999. Prior to working in the San Francisco Bay area, Bochenek did landscape design work in the tony Hamptons area of Long Island, N.Y.

Finding his way to the Triangle was natural for Bochenek, who earned a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from North Carolina State University. He has a master's in landscape architecture from Harvard University.

Also trained as a sculptor, Bochenek says he is called in "when people have no idea what to

do." While the Bochenek shop is small, he and Enright have "trained" a group of landscapers who execute their designs, including hoisting heavy boulders that Bochenek hand picks from an aged landslide in western Virginia.

At any time, the firm is juggling about five jobs — two in construction and three in conceptualization. This is not low-end landscape work; jobs can run well into six figures, and annual billings can approach \$2 million.

Bochenek approaches his work with the eye of an artist charged with the task of executing the vision of a client. "We are garden artists," he says. "Your garden is the expression of your inner needs and is not subject to fashion or popular style."

"... it looks as if it's always been here — a garden that nature created."

Tim Crouse, writer, regarding his Bochenek garden

Like Bochenek, Crouse escaped California and chose Chapel Hill because of a long-held memory. On his first assignment for *Rolling Stone* magazine in the 1960s, he was dispatched to Chapel Hill to do a story on the Taylor family, as in songwriter James Taylor and his father Ike Taylor, who was dean of the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine at the time.

He recalls Chapel Hill as being a beautiful and open community, but when he moved here and found the neighborhood he wanted, only one lot remained. And it was a challenge. "What I'd pictured as almost flat terrain in fact consisted of a plunging declivity giving way to a slightly gentler declivity. The house went up on a shelf between the two slopes. It was surrounded by red mud."

Crouse asked Bochenek to incorporate two features into his design for the land — a creek that did not exist, but he always yearned for, at a boyhood summer home on the north shore of Massachusetts and birch trees that did exist in abundance on that New England turf.

Now a man-made stream snakes through Crouse's property so near a screened porch that babblers are part of the environment, gathers into a pool and cascades down a slope at the back of the property. Lichened boulders were shipped in, and what were saplings 15 years ago when the property was landscaped are now fully mature river birch trees.

"... it looks as if it's always been here — a garden that nature created," Crouse writes of his garden, which, of course, was created by Peter Bochenek using nature's inventory of goodies.

BIO

Company: Bochenek & Associates

Business: Landscape architecture

Location: Chapel Hill

Partners:

Peter Bochenek, Gay Enright

Annual billings: \$1.5-\$1.8 million

Website:

www.pbassoc.com