

Small Door Manufacturer Makes Customer Service A Big Priority

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Well Bilt Industries founder Mike Bilt was an FBO owner in southeast Florida in the early 1970s, offering his clients hangar space rentals.

Expansion demands required him to have additional T-hangars constructed but he wasn't completely satisfied with the quality of the door products available for his buildings.

He decided to put his mechanical and electrical background to use and design the type of product he wanted for himself. As a pilot for over 40 years, Bilt could draw upon his experience as a hangar owner and user to develop an optimum door solution.

What he developed was the Well Bilt Industries Operator. It offered an ultra trim design to fit inside the leaf of a rolling door system. This allowed for maximum clear opening space for bottom rolling door systems and a much neater appearance for the door system and hangar.

The new operator was granted its first U.S. Patent in 1987 and a second one the following year. Its success led Well Bilt Industries to expand its product line to include custom steel door systems, specializing in hangar doors for airport facilities.

The widening of the product line meant Well Bilt Industries had to move to a larger facility in Williston, FL, in 1988. Located at the Williston Municipal Airport, this manufacturing facility has since been expanded twice and Well Bilt has nearly doubled its staff.

The company is now led by the founder's daughter, Carol Bilt, as president/owner, with the aid of Merle Loock, office manager for 9-1/2 years; Ken Martin, project manager/engineering department for three years; and Richard Williams, who has been the shop foreman for over five years.

Today's Well Bilt Industries offers its patented operator with a UL Listing and has acquired UL Listings for its one- and two-motor custom bi-fold door systems.

The company has developed customer relationships across the United States and in the Caribbean, with an eye toward a broadened international customer base.



These doors are great for a variety of applications from hangars to shops.



These hangars feature bi-fold doors from Well Bilt Industries.

The leadership team emphasizes to all of its customers that while it is a small, family- owned business, Well Bilt is capable of handling their largest needs.

Recently Metal Construction News talked with Carol Bilt about being a second-generation owner, specializing in a smaller product line and changes the door industry can expect in the wake of the numerous hurricanes that ravaged Florida last summer.

Metal Construction News: What was Well Bilt's mission statement when it was founded and how has it changed over the years?

Carol Bilt, president/owner, Well Bilt Industries: It is hard to say whether Well Bilt Industries was founded on an exact "mission statement". One thing is sure, the vision and heart of this company has remained the same. The company was founded on the vision of a more efficient product and of the highest quality possible.

Well Bilt Industries operates on the premise of "exceeding project specification".

Therefore, our door systems will undoubtedly provide top performance and will not be outdated as building codes change in the near future.

MCN: What changes have you made to the company since taking over as owner?

Bilt: After my father's sudden death in April 2000, I was faced with the decision to sell the company or relocate to Florida and meet all the challenges of keeping this alive.

Believing strongly in the vision of my father and the high integrity of both the company and its products, I found it impossible to let the company go. Working from a solid core, I proceeded by implementing computer systems and programs enabling the office and engineering staff to have all necessary information, past and current, available at a moment's notice.

I initiated regular staff meetings for research and development in order to improve our products in any way possible as well as move into the larger size door markets. I hate to use the phrase, but "super size it" is the best way to put it. Over these past years we have made the "Big Bi-Fold" a staple of production. An 80'-110' bi-fold door system is a common occurrence here which makes us all very proud.

As we have updated and improved our products, it was necessary to update our UL Listed systems as well. Larger

capacity electrical components were added.

MCN: Well Bilt prides itself on being a small, family-owned business with a history of stability. Why do you feel this is an important point to convey to your customers?

Bilt: Personal attention. We build relationships, not just doohrs.

MCN: Another point Well Bilt emphasizes is its focus on customer service. What services do you offer and how does your level of customer service differ from other door manufacturers?

Bilt: Being that Well Bilt Industries' customers vary from the private pilot to the general contractor to the metal building manufacturer to architects, the scope of our services far exceed just manufacturing and delivery of a door system. In many instances, the project is in the design phase and the project architect will require our specifications as well as recommendations for the project. In other cases the customer is looking to do a retrofit, which requires assistance in choosing the proper door system and ensuring the exact fit into the existing structure.

Well Bilt Industries also factory tests all of its bi-fold door systems and video tapes the testing. Along with the testing, each video includes installation and maintenance instructions. So, in other words, every Well Bilt Industries bi-fold door system has a custom video tape.

MCN: Well Bilt only manufactures doors and operators. Many other door manufacturers have branched out into other related products. Why hasn't Well Bilt done the same?

Bilt: From time to time, opportunities arise which tempt Well Bilt Industries to branch out into other products. Our manufacturing facility, equipment and expert staff could easily support such a venture, but we feel, at this time, we prefer to concentrate our sole energies on our custom door systems and operators. I would never want



An in-depth look at a quality bi-fold door being manufactured at the Well Bilt facility in Williston, FL.



The bi-fold doors on this page illustrate Well Bilt Industries' wide range of size capabilities.



to take the risk of neglecting the product and position in the marketplace we worked so hard to secure. I prefer to devote all our energies to manufacturing the best possible door systems and operators available.

MCN: Please describe your bi-fold doors and the available options.

Bilt: All of our custom bi-fold door systems are made of steel tubing, ranging from 14- to 7-gauge. Being that our bi-fold door systems are all custom made for each project, the size range varies enormously. We have designed and manufactured bi-fold door systems as small as 10' wide and as large as 110' wide. The heights have varied from 10' to almost 40'. The motor/brake combination ranges from one to five respectively. Well Bilt Industries uses only brand new, first quality materials

and components. Most Well Bilt Industries bi-fold door systems are delivered in one-piece, pre-wired and ready to install—very installation friendly.

Well Bilt Industries offers many options for its bi-fold door systems. Many such options include remote controls, auto lock system, warning bells, safety edge, and of course, UL Listing on our one- and two motor door systems.

MCN: What can you tell us about your rolling doors?

Bilt: Our custom rolling door systems are made from steel channel, ranging from 6" at 10.5 to 12" at 30. Smaller rolling door systems, in a low wind load area, can also be made from steel tubing. Heavy-duty steel wheels move the door on either steel ASCE rail or above ground vee track. Our rolling door systems are complete with an upper telescope top guide to allow for building deflection.

As for options, the most important are the Well Bilt Industries patented operators. Well Bilt Industries, though best known for its in-the-door ID171-200 model operator, also makes an operator which fits outside the door leaf, which is our OD171-200 model. All of our operators are available separately as well as with our own rolling door

systems. Therefore, any existing rolling door system, whether it be a Well Bilt Industries rolling door system or that of another manufacturer, can be fitted with our operator—new or retrofit.

MCN: Not many other manufacturers offer the operators for sale separately from the door. Why did you decide to make the operators available without the door?

Bilt: Well Bilt Industries was founded on its operators. They have always been available for purchase separately or with our rolling door systems. I have never given a moment's thought to changing that and see no reason to think otherwise. I feel the consumer has the option to customize his hangar with what best suits his needs, budget and knowledge. Selling the operators separately also allows an existing rolling door system not originally equipped with power to later be retrofit to meet the current owner's needs and desires.

The beauty of a Well Bilt operator is that we manufacture each unit separately— it's not a mass production item, pulled off the shelf and shipped out. Prior to filling each order, we give our customer an "Operator Questionnaire" which furnishes us with all the specifics of the existing rolling door system, number of door leaves, travel direction, size of bottom channel and so on. Having this information allows us to set the internal and external positions for a custom fit, which can be easily fine tuned at the jobsite during installation.

MCN: What options are available for your operators?

Bilt: UL Listing is available on our manual operator system. We also offer two variations of our automatic operators: a) Auto Open/Manual Close and b) Auto Open/Auto Close. The Auto Close system strongly recommends specific safety options such as safety edge, photo eye and



The Hinckley Yacht facility in Stuart, FL, is closed by a Well Bilt rolling door.

timely, costly and frustrating. The company and the product must submit and resubmit countless product schematics, design renderings, component brand names, numbers, UL file numbers, etc. Then the product is inspected and tested on site. Usually this process is repeated several times.

Due to constant system upgrades, component substitutions or additional alternates, we have just updated our existing UL Listing which was once again subjected to all of the original process.

Anyone who purchases a UL Listed system/ product can rest assured that they have purchased a product that has been subjected to every possible test and criteria and has passed. Underwriters' Laboratory is dedicated to the ultimate safety of the consumer. UL Listing offers piece of mind.

MCN: Do you deliver your products on your own trucks and if so, why?

Bilt: Yes, we deliver our door systems on our own truck. We have a Freightliner Semi Tractor Trailer and we have several trailers, two of which are extendable stretching out to 75' max. With blanket permits for Florida, and nationwide escort services available, Well Bilt Industries has the capability to deliver any size, anywhere, anytime. We only use our own drivers who know the proper way the doors should be unloaded. All our deliveries are designated loads, so the product goes direct from factory to customer.



Well Bilt doors are delivered on the company's own truck and trailer.

warning bells. All are available through Well Bilt Industries at the time of ordering your operator system.

MCN: Many of your products are UL Listed. What process did you have to go through to obtain these listings and why do you feel it is an important distinction?

Bilt: We are UL Listed and approved on our manual operators and on our one and two-motor bi-fold door systems. UL Listing is available as an option when desired or required.

The process to achieve UL Listed status is extremely

MCN: How has the recent steel situation affected your business? Do you expect better pricing and availability for this year?

Bilt: The first quarter of 2004 was a very frustrating period. The weekly steel price increases clouded by the uncertain availability made our project quoting process an ongoing rework. Seeing a definite pattern and warned to "get used to it" made our normal process near impossible.

To avoid any disruption in our production schedule and our commitment to our customers, Well Bilt Industries



As last year's hurricanes proved, Well Bilt can protect your investment.

purchased additional stock to exceed the in-house orders. This way we were avoiding many of the future price increases and most important, insured future production would not be in jeopardy.

Only being into the early segment of 2005, it is hard to predict pricing, but we definitely see a restructure in the various steel sizes available. This definitely affects our ordering and material waste ratio.

MCN: You are located in Florida, which we all know was hit pretty hard by hurricanes last summer. Tell us what you have observed in regards to the performance of hangar doors in general during the hurricanes.

Bilt: Being a Florida-based company enabled me to visit many of the hardest hit locations after the four hurricanes. Many such locations looked like bombs had been dropped. It was a very haunting sight to see airplanes torn to pieces and hangars crumbled like a house of cards. Unfortunately, a side effect of hurricanes is the tornados as well.

So not only are structures subjected to the intense wind forces and relentless rains, they then are subjected to the hit or miss tornado.

Not saying this because they were my doors, but we have heard very positive feedback regarding the condition of our door systems. Many locations I visited in person and many customers I called to see how they were and how the hangar, doors and plane weathered the storms—no serious damage, property loss and the doors were fine. There was some outside sheeting damage from flying debris and roofs were blown off, but nothing catastrophic.

We received several phone calls and emails from customers stating how well our doors held up and attributed them to minimizing the overall building damage. One customer in DeLand, FL, wrote, "Hangar and door had 0 problems. Thanks for a good job." Another such correspondence stated, "I wanted you to know that we had hangar door failures at PBIA (Palm Beach International Airport) and North County, but none of the damaged doors were yours. The Well Bilt doors held up very well, and when the doors hold up, the building is likely to stay together. Well done."

We only had some replacement parts requested and some motor/brake assemblies due to power outages or water damage.

MCN: Do you think code changes will be made in Florida that will affect the door industry?

Bilt: Definitely. Just as Hurricane Andrew had such a major impact resulting in all of the current building codes, we already see certain counties in Florida where we have current active projects requiring additional engineering and certifications.

We may never experience a hurricane season as intense as that of 2004, but no one, especially Well Bilt Industries, wants to be unprepared.

We have always designed and manufactured our products to exceed

the specification requirements. Well Bilt Industries has never cut corners and never will.



Large rolling and bi-fold doors are welcomed by Well Bilt Industries.

MCN: Please state your vision for Well Bilt over the next five years.

Bilt: My vision for the next five years is exactly the same as it has been in past years: "All efforts to design and manufacture the highest quality bi-fold and rolling door systems and operators possible.

Continue to give the best product and customer support system maintaining the high integrity of both our products and company reputation".

Well Bilt Industries will remain dedicated to excellence — generation to generation.

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