

THE POINT

ISSUE 63
SUMMER 2013

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL

ONAL PIERCERS

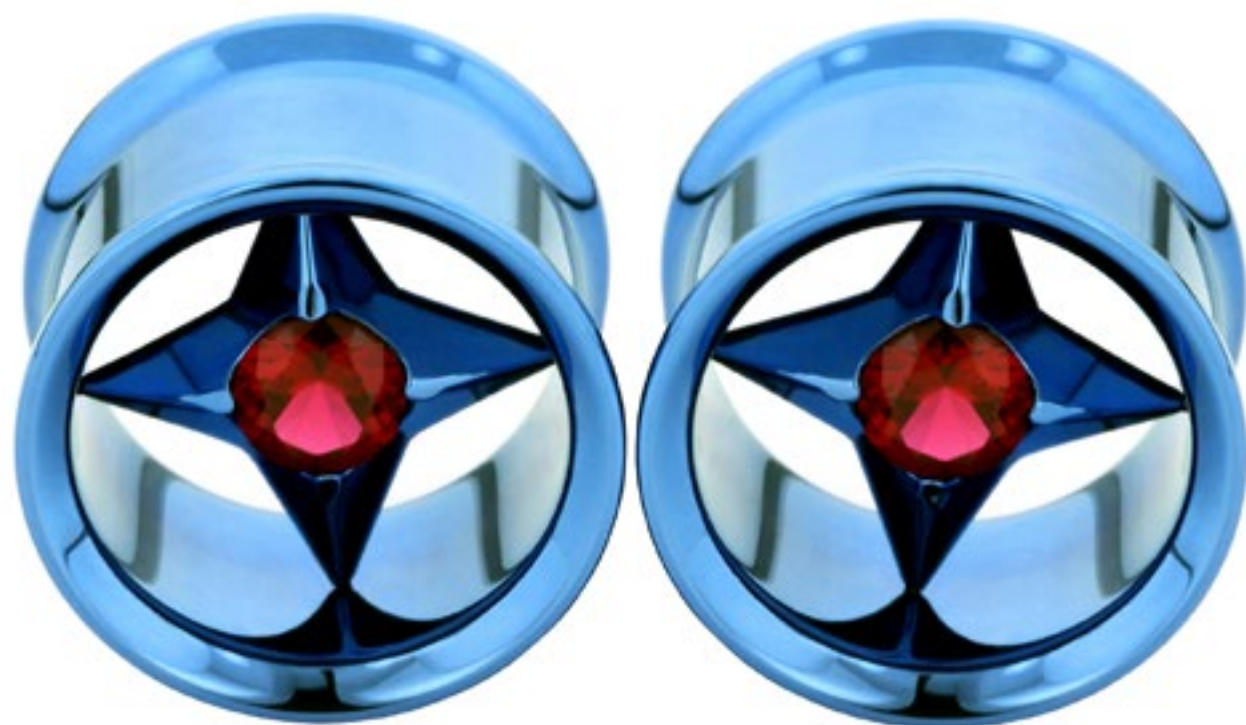


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- A portrait of a man with a beard and blue eyes, wearing a black tank top. He has extensive tattoos on his arms, including a large, colorful sleeve on his left arm and a red heart with wings on his chest. He also has a large gauge earring in his left ear and a tattoo on his forehead.
- Shannon Larratt—Two Tributes p. 8
 - Arizona Legislation p. 16

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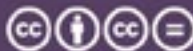
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FROM THE EDITOR



KIMBERLY ZAPATA
The Point Editor

As we all know, switching *The Point* to an online-only format has been quite the change. In many respects, this switch was inevitable; the internet is the “way of the future,” though the future has been here for quite some time. But this does not mean many of us—myself included—do not miss the way things were: the touch and feel of freshly printed paper, the glossy cover that slid beneath our fingertips as we flipped through each and every page, and that one piece of mail that made the day better (you know, that something special that wasn’t a bill or brochure for office supplies). So it is in these moments of nostalgia that feedback—like that from Randall Martinez—is all the more important.

Randall is from a small town in Nebraska. Having lived in major metropolitan areas for the last 17 years—and having never been to Nebraska—I can only speculate what “small town” means. What I know it means for Randall is that, until recently, Randall was never exposed to an issue of *The Point*. However, once *The Point* became a fully-online APP publication, Randall took note. He contacted Elayne Angel in April, commenting on her President’s Corner:

“This is really cool that they [the issues of The Point] are available online. I [have] never seen an issue of The Point until now. Thanks from Nebraska.”

As simple a gesture as this comment was, it means a lot not only to myself, Elayne Angel, Kendra Jane,

Jim Ward, Brian Skellie, and the entire Point team, but to our community as a whole. In this digital age we often think of ourselves as closer than ever before, but we’ve also become lulled into a false sense of security that everyone—everywhere—knows what we are thinking and doing at all times. We tend to forget how very big this world is, and how very small we are. While the internet helps to bridge this gap—what could possibly help us achieve our [mission](#) of the “dissemination of information about body piercing” better—notes from Randall remind us just how far we have come, as an organization and piercing family, and how far we have to go.

So while it’s okay to feel nostalgic (hell, that is one reason we will be publishing an annual “Best of the Best” anthology), to quote Dolores Umbridge—“progress for progress’s sake must be discouraged,” but progress for the sake of change—change

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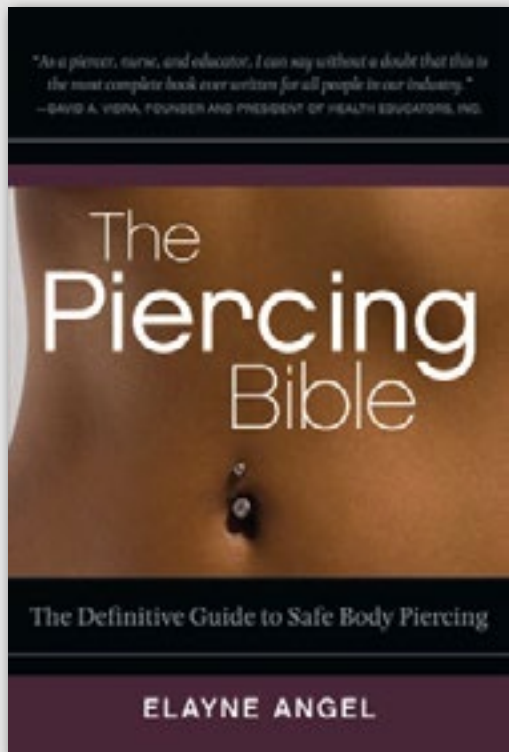
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like Randall and others have no doubt experienced—is worth each and every painful step. So sit back and enjoy this issue of *The Point*, whether you are reading it from a computer screen in your shop, the comfort of your home, or your cellphone, laptop, or e-reader at the [2013 APP Annual Conference and Exposition](#).



photo by Sean Hartgrove



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR - ELAYNE ANGEL has been a professional piercer for more than 20 years and has performed over 40,000 piercings. She was awarded the President's Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Professional Piercers in 2006 and is a contributing writer for *PAIN* Magazine. She lives in Mérida, Mexico. Visit www.piercingbible.com for more information.

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PAPERBACK

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PHOTOS & ILLUSTRATIONS

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RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

An Intimate History of the Modern Body Piercing Movement by Jim Ward

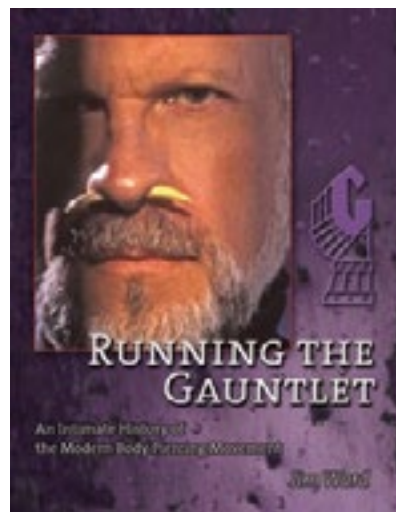
In this revealing autobiography, Jim Ward, considered by many to be the father of the modern piercing industry, tells the engaging and candid story of discovering his own fascination with body piercing, his founding of Gauntlet, the world's first body piercing studio, and how he transformed a personal fetish and backroom, amateur pursuit into a respected profession and spearheaded a world-wide social phenomenon.

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"Essential reading for anyone who wants to understand how modern body piercing arrived at the place it currently occupies."

JAMES WEBER, Former President
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



ELAYNE ANGEL
APP President

I bounded out of bed this morning excited to finally have the time to record my “President’s Corner” video, having finished the current round of edits on the forthcoming update of the APP Procedure Manual. Imagine my shock and dismay when I looked in the mirror to find that my entire face was hugely blown up with red burned-looking patches of tissue under both eyes and in my nasolabial folds. (One of my eyes was all but swollen shut!) My best guess is that I’m having an allergic reaction to a facial moisturizer that I’ve used for quite some time with no other such incidents, and the doctor I visited thought the same. Unfortunately, this means no video recording for me today...

But this episode did remind me of a problem I experienced while guest piercing a few months back. When I travel, I generally make use of the supplies provided by each studio, requesting only that my glove size (XS) be “on hand.” I had never had any problems with sensitivities or allergies before, so I was very surprised when the backs of my hands swelled up with an itchy and painful red rash. The gloves I wore were nitrile, which according to several sources (i.e., [Ambitex University](#) and the [National Safety Council](#)) is less apt to cause a reaction than latex, which I have used for decades without issues. On my final day I grimaced in pain each time I changed gloves and washed my hands. The residual effects—including inflammation, soreness, and itching—lasted over a week and were followed by flaking and peeling. It was not pleasant or pretty, and it was kind of scary. What if all types of medical gloves suddenly caused such a reaction?

Granted, my appointment book has been extraordinarily full lately, which is wonderful. I usually pierce one client after the next throughout my workday; so, I wash my hands and wear gloves in a continuous cycle for many hours, day after day, but piercers in very busy studios frequently do the same.

When the problem occurred, I didn’t know whether it was the soap I was using to wash my hands or the gloves themselves. So the next time I worked, I used the same soap and changed up the gloves to chloroprene, and

thankfully didn’t have any problems. It became clear that nitrile was the culprit, even though I had worn it successfully in the past. Many piercers are aware that long and/or frequent exposure to a substance can lead to sensitivities, which is one of the reasons latex allergies are so prevalent in the medical and dental fields.

In any case, one takeaway lesson for today is this: situations can change, and flexibility is needed.

So, on to the topic I planned to cover in the video: The Association recently received a plea for help in a message from a piercer in Louisiana who was distressed to learn that as of March 7, 2013, the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners has issued a formal opinion outlawing surface anchors (the preferred terminology of the Association of Professional Piercers). It was provided in response to an inquiry from one of the Health Inspectors at the Food and Drug Unit, which is responsible for regulating body artists in the state. The letter from the Medical Board states, “...the practice known as ‘dermal anchoring’ or ‘dermal piercing’ is a **medical procedure** [emphasis added] in that placement would be underneath the epidermis layer of the skin.”

The piercer who sent us the correspondence mentioned that after speaking with Mr. Warren, the Health Inspector for her area who requested the ruling, she believed the practice was decreed a medical procedure because the State Board was informed that these piercings were all being performed with biopsy punches. In the state of Louisiana, piercers are prohibited from using such punches.

The APP will be sending a letter to the Executive Director of the Medical Board who signed the ruling, and also to the Health Inspector to let them know that surface anchors can be done with ordinary piercing needles and that biopsy punches need not be used—and that the organization does not consider this form of body adornment to be outside the realm of ordinary body piercings. We will also explain that other body piercings routinely traverse this same tissue. Further, we will be sharing our formal position statement with them:



**What is the APP Position on Surface Anchors?
(Also referred to as Single-Point Piercings, Dermal
Anchors, Microdermals, and other names.)**

In a surface anchor piercing procedure, a tiny ornament is inserted into a single opening that is formed in the tissue with the same tools that are used for body piercing. This opening is the entrance as well as the exit. When properly performed by a skilled practitioner, surface anchor piercing is no more risky than an ordinary body piercing and takes no longer to perform or to heal. They are considered to be body piercings by the Association of Professional Piercers.

Surface anchor piercings are similar to “surface piercings,” which are done on flat areas of the body, but successful placement options are greatly expanded. Surface anchor piercings are a viable alternative to standard surface piercings as they appear to be easier to heal and not as subject extensive scarring. Any residual scarring is apt to be limited due to the tiny size of the jewelry.

Surface Anchor piercings are much less invasive to

insert and remove, and should not be confused with subdermal or transdermal implants, which are more extreme forms of body art that do not fall within the scope of the Association of Professional Piercers.

We hold out hope that our support will be able to get the ban overturned in the state of Louisiana, which is where I ran my own studio, Rings of Desire, for over a dozen years before Hurricane Katrina hit. But that’s a different story...

In early 2000, I personally assisted the legislators for that state in promulgating the original body art regulations. At that time, they were quite amenable to input from professionals in the community. Hopefully they still are, and the decision will be reversed once they have additional information. The APP has had success in the past getting such a ban overturned in the state of New Jersey. But there is no guarantee, so once again the theme may recur: sometimes situations change and adaptability is necessary.

SHANNON LARRATT—TWO TRIBUTES



ALLEN FALKNER
SHAWN PORTER

Editor's Note: With the following articles the APP would like to recognize the contributions to the the modification community of BMEzine founder, Shannon Larratt, who apparently took his own life following a long and painful battle with an incurable illness.

Catalyst to a Community

By Allen Falkner

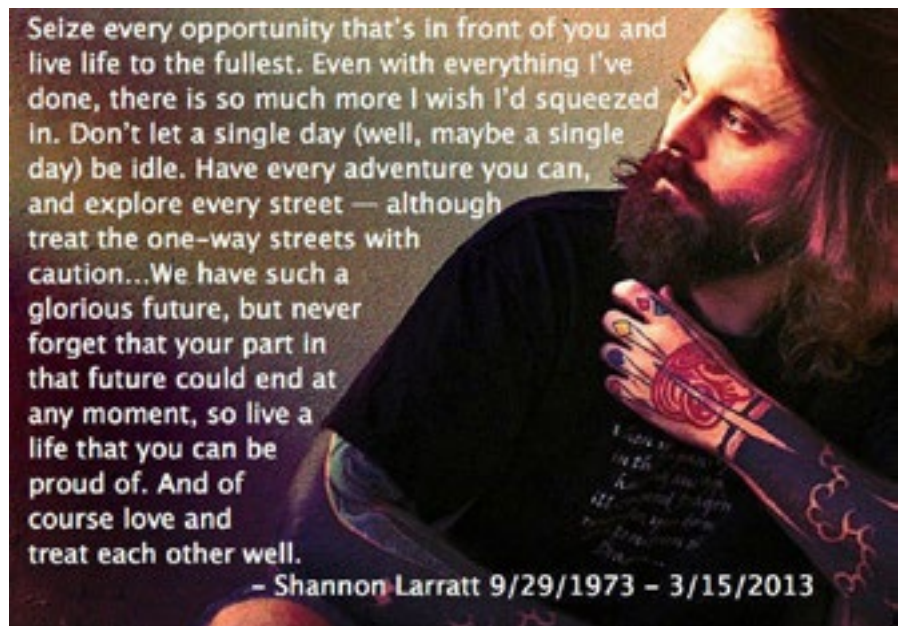
Editor's Note: This passage first appeared on [HookLife](#) on March 19th, 2013.

In life there is a simple truth: We all die. What we do with the time that we have is important. When this mortal coil winds to an end, what is left?

How should one spend their days? For some, it's a pursuit to amass wealth and fortune. Others may seek experience and adventure. Should we quest for glory? Enlightenment? Discover the unknown? Who's to say what is the right path in life? For me, I feel that it is our legacy that holds real value. The people we influence and the lives we change gives meaning to it all. To be remembered and to make a difference is, in my humble opinion, the true measure of one's existence.

Who was [Shannon Larratt](#)? I feel that there are better people to describe him and to tell his tales. I have no doubt that e-books will be written and memoirs published on his behalf. I want to focus on the community he helped to spawn.

Before Facebook, Myspace, and Friendster (does anyone even remember that one?) Shannon created a little microcosm called Body



Modification Ezine, better known as BMEzine or simply [BME](#). As for his intentions of its creation, the story of its progression, and the future of the site; I will leave these topics for the historians to discuss. The reason for this article is to focus on his impact.

What could have been a tiny spark or mere flash in the pan turned into a blazing fire that lit up the lives of people around the globe. Believe it or not, less than two decades ago body modification was much more of an underground activity and—for many—quite taboo. Back then, the World Wide Web was still in its infancy and online communication between modded folks was generally done through Usenet groups. ([Google it.](#)) It wasn't until sites like BME appeared that the community was able to come together and communicate.

Was it a matter of being in the

right place at the right time or pure genius? Who can say, but it truly was a perfect storm. With the rise of media exposure and the shift from print to digital images people all over the earth could suddenly share their experiences and discuss their passion through sites like BME. A community was born, and it was a revolution. Shannon Larratt was truly a catalyst to a generation. In fact, I think Shannon said best in his [final blog entry](#):

A friend told me once that my role was that of a "catalyst" — that I started fires inside people that helped them to change themselves (or become themselves) in positive way. I feel so lucky to have found myself in that position, and I want to offer my heartfelt thanks for everyone who made that possible. And I'd like to think that even though I was a big puzzle piece in

body modification, that I was a smaller but still important puzzle piece in a larger movement of people from all sorts of different subcultures fighting for mutual support in a diverse pantheon of self-expression and dream chasing.

Shannon, you will be greatly missed by many. Thank you, not only for your unending support of the world of body modification and suspension, but in your constant efforts to uphold people's rights and freedoms and instill confidence and happiness in those of us who are just a little different.

Shannon Larratt—An Obituary

By Shawn Porter

It was because of a memorial that I initially met Shannon Larratt. My mentor had passed away, and new to the ways of social networking I posted a brief obituary on rec.arts.bodyart (R.A.B.) that caught his eye. Shortly after I posted it, he sent me an email: "I didn't know Jack personally, but his list of modifications was impressive. If you'd like to post something on my website, I'd love to have it."

BME was a fledgling at the time. While it was the biggest body modification site on the internet (then and now), it was still hosted on the ~io.org server and was still severely lacking in content. I replied and, thinking I had just met one of the nicest girls in Canada, our friendship started to develop. "No. Not a girl. I get that alot."

From there, our emails became frequent. At the time, there weren't a lot of people our age interested in heavy body modification; in Shannon, I found a kindred spirit whose willingness to push the boundaries was equal to mine. He was someone who read weird comics, watched weird sci-fi movies, and also had a passion for modification. At the time, I was a paying member of Unique, spending \$70 every six months to meet folks three times my age via a mail exchange service, meeting clandestinely in hotel rooms at tattoo conventions and brought together by our shared interest in modification, but not much else.

I started submitting content to BME to help flesh out the surgical sections, as well as the "advanced" modification section and, eventually received an email from Shannon just shy of a year after Jack's death—and our first interaction—telling me that he was working on something new and needed my help and input. Our mutual desire to expose surgical modification to the masses had WORKED, and more people were becoming interested in extreme modifications than we could have imagined. More surprisingly, it was bringing people with existing modifications out of the woodwork. Photos and videos were pouring in—some even being relayed through me to avoid possible seizure at customs. (At the time most folks

didn't have a scanner for their photos, and digital cameras were still uncommon.) Soon, sections of the site were filling up, and new modifications were being discovered.

There were more people interested in "our" world than we thought possible, and with the anniversary of Jack's passing approaching, Shannon rolled out BME/Extreme, complete with the password "guarding the walls." The price to enter: submit photos of your own advanced modification. Lurkers came out in droves: "I'm not sure if my subincision will get me a password, but..."

From the small communities that had sprung up via postal exchange—Unique, BCQ, Enigma—none of us could have guessed how many people out there were already doing these procedures. Shannon didn't invent the game, but he sure as hell gave us a room to play in. However, these communities were closed, hard to find. They came with a great deal of secrecy, and a signup fee. BME/Extreme leveled the playing field; it turned on all the lights.

I finally met Shannon in person in Detroit, 1998. Lankier than I expected, he emerged from a Greyhound bus with his hood drawn up like a monk and smiling his half smile with a hand extended. "We have to get out of here. Let's find a hotel." It turns out Detroit was much sketchier than he was used to, and he booked us a suite in one of the nicest hotels in the city—earning a few stares from the patrons not used to stretched lobes and heavily visible tattoos. Over the course of the night we talked, and talked. Thankfully, the getting-to-know-you phase of our friendship had happened virtually, so when we met we were able to dive right in and talk shop.

/Extreme was now several years old, and had been joined by its twin /HARD, and Shannon was ready to move on to something new. "So, we've got all of these people talking via /Extreme. What do you think about a modification convention? No hotel rooms or sketchy practitioners...just a chance for people who may not know how to find willing artists to get worked on, and who can show off their modifications for BME?"

Several hours later, MODCon 1998 was being discussed. We decided we would host it in my area of Florida, and BME would fund it. Shannon wanted to contact Joel Peter Witkin (and later, Alejandro Jodorowsky) to document it. The invite list would be strict, the rules stricter, but—finally—our community would have an outlet. We wouldn't feel alone.

While that particular event never happened, a year later MODCon was held in Toronto. To date, it is one of my single proudest moments. It was a monument to Jack's legacy, and a home for people who always felt like outsiders. We met, took photos, performed modifica-

tions, risked life and limb, and even managed to be a bunch of goofball tourists.

The groundwork had been laid to do something bigger, and in 2000 Shannon rolled out the IAM subsite of BME. Inspired by Livejournal, IAM was a diary site where BME readers, unfamiliar with HTML, could start their own home pages free of any stigma from posting body modification content. It was also a tool to increase submissions to BME. From there, the community and the site would grow together.

Thirteen years later I feel that the impact of IAM was Shannon's greatest contribution to the body modification scene. Relationships were forged on that site that remain with thousands of us today: events were planned and friendships—even relationships—made. So much excess that Dionysus would be impressed. ModCon was very niche, but IAM...well, there your nose piercing carried as much weight as someone else's facial tattoos. You had friends all over the world who were there to support you through your hardest times as well as your happiest.

BMEFests happened: Suscons, Zombiethons, Scarwars. The “weirdos”—god bless us—went bowling, gambling, and rafting all while Shannon was constantly one-

upping the site code, the party, or the community. The room he originally provided us grew into a playground.

Over the years my friendship with Shannon evolved. We didn't always agree—far from it. As I got older my views became increasingly conservative, and his progressively more radical. We would butt heads—privately and publicly—about the safety of a procedure or the ethics of a practitioner, but we would always respect the other's opinion and by the end of the argument we would be smiling. We went through good periods and bad together, the balance shifting depending on the year. But through it all, he remained someone whose impact on my life is so thorough that it's impossible to imagine my life without him.

Had you told me almost 18 years ago that one day I'd be writing a memorial for him...

Shannon Larratt passed away in Toronto, Ontario. He was 39 years old and is survived by his daughter Nefarious, his fiancé Caitlyn, and his former wife Rachel—who carries on the BME family of sites. He was so many things to so many people: a mentor, a teacher, an inspiration... but to me, he was my friend.

Rest in Peace, Brother.



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MAKING SAFE PIERCING VIRAL —SOCIAL MEDIA DOS & DON'TS



APRIL BERARDI
JULIE TAYLOR

To find out how piercers can use social media effectively, we interviewed several social media savvy piercers—April Berard from Born this Way Body Arts, A.J. Goldman from 12 Ounce Studios, Courtney Jane (CJ) from Saint Sabrina's, Derek Lowe from Saint Sabrina's, Christina Shul from High Priestess, and Crystal Sim from Evolution—and asked them to list some simple Do's & Don'ts of online media usage. But first, remember that our audience doesn't have the intimate relationship we have with piercing and industry related news. (One post could be someone's first impression of you or piercing, so be sure to post with that in mind.)

Below are some recommendations to keep your page—and posts—positive and interesting:

DOs:

- DO** have a social media page and keep it active! Because—after all—our clients are media savvy, and online.
- DO** create a Facebook page just for your work (especially if you're not comfortable sharing your personal life with the public).
- DO** post and share photos of cool piercings, unique placements, or new jewelry—and when companies release photos of new products, sharing them on your pages can generate instant interest, resulting in potential sales or special orders.



Screen capture, used with CJ Maxwell's permission, is an illustration of how posting pictures of clients and new shop jewelry can bring your page positive attention.

- DO** give credit if you repost an image. Be sure to list and link, whenever possible, to the names of the image creator, piercer, studio and/or jewelry manufacturer.
- DO** post healed piercings for piercing portfolios as much as possible.
- DO** post fresh work for status update posts.
- DO** answer questions promptly! If you leave your page(s) unattended for too long, your clients could seek out other studios (or friends) to help them. According to Derek, "Even if it's not your intent to engage your

clients that way, they are going to expect to be able to engage you [on your social media pages]. If you don't respond, you're blowing them off. No good, obviously."

- DO** consider posting only the things you would be proud to show your mother, young kids, the health department, a respected peer, or a potential employer.
- DO** post fun things that happen in the shop. CJ advises "Our job is very much seen as 'cool' by the general public, so giving them a peek into the fun/funny things we do is great advertising. Even more, it gives us a

chance to promote the positive side of the business. Imagine, if people think you can say literally anything you want to, and what you choose to post is how awesome your shop/customers/job is, they are going to get a really good feeling about what we do...I intentionally post some things about my private life, because I know my clients like to feel like they 'know' me. It makes them more comfortable with me, and certainly more loyal."

•DO post regularly; routine is key. If you post often, your clients will begin to put you into their own media routine. Derek says, "you can't just have a FB page or tumblr page and expect people to flock to it and interact with it. You have to put out content regularly to keep people engaged and interested. Simply having the page isn't enough."

•DO actively take part in discussions on your page. Your clients love interacting with you, so if they are commenting in a thread about new trends, join in the conversation and give them your professional input.

•DO keep your network abreast of local, national, or even international trends. (If septum jewelry is flying out of your studio, tell your readers how hot septums are.) The same goes



This Facebook account was reaching over 15,000 unique people in a recent week, and has the ability to reach over 3 million friends of page fans with just one post. Note: These options and analytics are unavailable on personal pages.

for legislation changes and any news that pertains to the piercing and tattoo community as a whole.

•DO post tips on caring for body piercings.

•DO post compelling, interactive, and relevant content:

Ask your readers to interact by requesting their opinions in your posts (ex: Which pair do you like best? What do you think of this color combination? What do you think of this new piercing placement?)

Use tags. Jesse notes that "taking pictures of your client's piercings and tagging them in a photo on your fan page will also generate some great feedback and possibly new followers...which will potentially lead to new clients."

Make posts visually striking. Derek told us, "I think that piercing (and tattooing) are very fortunate in that they are both visual mediums... so they can benefit greatly from social media sites which are wonderful tools for delivering the visual. So, the more visually interesting/impacting it is, the better it utilizes the power of social media."

•DO make occasional, unplanned, short-term specials.

•DO tell your clients about your pages. (This means that you give your social media contact info to everyone.) CJ says, "I give my facebook URL to every single person I pierce, or to people that I haven't pierced but came to me for trouble-shooting advice. I even tell my clients to link me to jewelry they find that they like so I can help them make sure it's good quality, or at least help them find something similar that is". Jesse's tip—"During my aftercare speech I will also discuss with my clients the social networks that I'm available on and also have the links on all of our aftercare brochures. Plus I'll personally ask them to join our fan page, or randomly discuss Facebook or Instagram etc. during the actual piercing appointment. This has earned me many followers/friends over the years as my clients felt comfortable finding me online and asking questions."



This image—courtesy of Facebook—illustrates how online media can help you gain a better understanding of your client base, and how well you are interacting with your followers. Note: These options and analytics are unavailable on personal pages.

DON'TS:

- DON'T** post illegal activities or activities that could be construed as medical procedures. Crystal suggests, “If this is your lifestyle, try flying under the radar.”
- DON'T** be afraid to talk positively about yourself and your accomplishments, or the cool things you like.
- DON'T** be a miserable online complainer.
- DON'T** repeat yourself every day. Things like “I’m here piercing until 9pm” get old fast.
- DON'T** post anything you aren’t prepared to answer questions about, or get lots of requests for.
- DON'T** post ANYTHING online that you wouldn’t be proud to share with clients. CJ says, “My Facebook is primarily for work...I avoid anything excessively vulgar or profane, and generally try to keep things PG-13. I want the things that are posted to reflect me in the same way that I would want to be seen if I were with a client in my shop.”
- DON'T** make negative posts about clients—even when it is hypothetical, or when no names are mentioned.
- DON'T** make any negative posts about other studios, piercers, or the industry.

•**DON'T** sign up for more accounts than you can handle. If you do not have the time, manpower, or resources to oversee the page, do not create it—out of date information and unanswered questions can do more harm than the good.

Rather than try to take on too much at once, use these Do’s and Don’ts to fine tune what you are already doing. Start with a few that will work for you, and watch your social media presence grow, as there are few things you can do with your business that will have the kind of immediate return and positive impact on your piercing business than social media interaction will.



Photo by Autumn Swisher

Quetzallijewelry.com ... filigree . ammonites . huichol . hoops . labret . septum . and a bit more ...



Charles Gatewood Retires

Hi Everyone! I'm retiring this year, and my 50-year archive will be moving to a major institution. It will take awhile to complete the deal, so if any true believers would like to acquire any of my piercing collection, please contact me at charles@charlesgatewood.com. Besides photos of early piercers and piercing enthusiasts, I also have several exhibition-quality silver prints and boxes of ephemera (letters, clippings, posters, magazine—like *PFIQ* and *Body Play*—flyers, etc). I also have photos from all my best piercing shoots, including Fakir's Sundance ceremony (1982), many photos from *Modern Primitives*, plus lots of other collectibles, including a large tattoo archive. I'm in San Francisco, so stop by the shop, RSVP, and get them while you can!

Cheers,
Charles Gatewood
Box 410052
San Francisco, CA 94141
(415) 267-7651
charles@charlesgatewood.com



ARKANSAS LEGISLATION



MISTY FORSBERG

When it comes to discussing what has taken place with the legislative changes in Arkansas, I still feel a little uneasy believing that it is all said and done. I think that after over a year of walking on eggshells— we didn't celebrate too early or get our hopes up before anything was finalized—has had a lasting effect on my ability to really relax now that things are officially signed and in place as law. The whole process really has been two stories unfolding, side-by-side, as we both fought for higher standards to be put in place surrounding body art, yet at the same time tried to prevent a ban on scarification¹. Steve Joyner handed me some of the best advice at the very beginning of this whole process when he made it clear that we would hate this before it was over, but that it would be worth it. At the time I didn't understand what he meant. After countless nights crying at my laptop as I removed paragraph after paragraph that the state wouldn't agree to budge on—and times where I genuinely didn't know if I was capable of accomplishing what I had set out to do—those words now make complete sense. It was one of the most rewarding and—at times—most heartbreaking projects I have ever had the pleasure of working on.

For the sake of this not becoming a novel, the brief history of how this started began when the Arkansas Department of Health held a meeting with a group of two piercers—one permanent cosmetic artist and around ten tattoo artists—to discuss



the idea of making legislative changes that might help our state. While the others attending the meeting came unprepared with any sort of solutions to the complaints they had with our current laws, Dustin Jackson and I took the advice of Steve Joyner by meeting beforehand; we arrived prepared with a printed copy of Oregon's body art laws, notes on improved training requirements we felt were necessary, and resources that the state could turn to for updated piercing information and facts. Our planning paid off, and after the first meeting it became clear that the state was relying on the two of us to hand them the legislation we wanted to see in place; without really knowing it, we had jumped straight into the deep end of the pool.

The next year was a blur of meetings with each other, the state, and Steve as he guided us through the

many hoops that must be jumped through to write and implement legislative changes. The seemingly endless lineup of meetings to keep the momentum going were difficult on us all; the meetings required hours of driving, several days at a time away from our work as well as our families, and—for Steve—five meetings that involved long flights out from California. To say that it was a crash course for Dustin and I would be an understatement, and to add to the turbulence that comes with any change to an industry, the state's attempts to send out 'sample' drafts of what the new laws might look like turned our already difficult task into an all out uphill battle to calm nerves and dispel the misconceptions it created. The only positive reaction that came from the uproar it caused was the formation of the Arkansas Body Modification Association by

Joe Phillips. The ABMA is a group open to all licensed Arkansas artists which, for the first time, brought us together in an organized and unified way to work toward a common goal as opposed to fighting against ourselves. It couldn't have come together at a better time. The AMBA allowed us to have a small network of artists that voted together on the issues that Dustin and I had sought to change; it turned the ideas of two people into a voice that could actually represent the body art industry.

With the approval of the Department of Health, the State Board of Private Career Education, and a Senator (who sponsored the bill), we thought we were finally on our way to a successful piece of legislation. But before any celebration could take place, I received word that a Senator was drafting a bill to ban certain forms of body art, including scarification. That Senator happened to be Missy Irvin who, as our sponsor, held the future of our body art bill in her hands. We had some warning that this might take place (thanks to a previous meeting in which the attorney for the Department of Health questioned us about several forms of heavy body modification). Even so, I was unprepared as I read the draft she had written. Being the only active scarification artist in my state (at least, that I was aware of), it was incredibly difficult to not feel like I had been slapped in the face by the people I had dedicated so many hours of work to. After several failed attempts to educate those presenting the ban about the inaccuracies throughout their bill, I realized that the decision was not whether or not to fight this, but how to fight this and who would I have to stand with me.

This is where the story really divides between our bill, SB388, and the modification ban, SB387. I wish that I could write this from an unbiased

or universal viewpoint of all those involved, but it would be impossible to even try. I can't really explain the internal conflict of knowing that fighting for something I loved and believed in might destroy the year of work that we had all put in with SB388. Steve and I discussed the possible consequences of fighting against the same Senator that had the power to kill our bill before it was ever heard, and the rational side of me knew that if it absolutely came down to it I would have to put the interest of my industry as a piercer first. (He was a good enough friend to not sugar coat the fact that I was—very likely—fighting a losing battle, one that would pit me against a Senator and the Department of Health to defend scarification as a legitimate form of body art.) The odds were not good, and the impact on SB388 could have been grave if it wasn't approached carefully.

The first round of fighting was broken between two meetings in the Senate Committee for Public Health, Welfare, and Labor. It was somewhat surreal that I was personally responsible for speaking on behalf of my industry. Although I expected to be terrified, I felt—more than anything—fortunate to have those I worked with trust me to be in this position. In the end, the overwhelming crush of losing the fight for scarification was countered by the unanimous vote in favor of our body art bill, SB388. With an unexpected show of media attention on the potential scarification ban, and SB388 looking more and more likely to pass on through the house, we were given a difficult decision; take a gamble by talking to the media (which could easily turn on us) or roll over and allow scarification to silently become illegal. We took the gamble and began speaking out online, in the media, and to other artists to try and get as much awareness

as possible before the House Committee meeting—which would be our last chance to overturn the ban. The gamble paid off, and the worldwide response was incredible; emails poured into the inboxes of the House members scheduled to vote on both bills.

The day before the meeting at the House, Senator Irvin and the Department of Health offered to amend the bill to meet our requests if, in turn, we would quit speaking against it in the media and agree not to oppose it in the committee meeting. I was speechless; not only were they no longer considering banning scarification, they were willing to list it as a regulated form of body art (one which individuals can be licensed in—like tattooing, piercing, and branding). Our voice had finally been heard! We chose to speak in favor of the bill at the meeting in order reassure the members of the committee, who had received email after email against it, that the amendments satisfied the needs of our industry. In the end, both bills passed unanimously.

I honestly have no words that can explain the combination of relief, excitement, disbelief, and gratefulness I realized once we had won. Although much of what we want to accomplish will come in the months ahead, as we write the rules and regulations, our biggest battle is now behind us. With this bill in place, the most significant advances for the piercing industry will include requiring that all steel and titanium jewelry for initial piercing meet ASTM standards (accompanied with mill test certificates), requiring all acceptable materials for initial piercing will be listed in the rules and regulations, banning the use of piercing guns outside of the earlobe, setting age limits set for all body art procedures, and requiring yearly BBP certification for art-

ists, and stricter requirements for body art instructors. And, hopefully, this list will only continue to grow as we move forward over the next few months.

Oddly, the most valuable lesson I learned from this was not about legislative writing, legalities, or how to create change in my state. It was about support, the importance of all of us supporting each other as an industry. There were several points in this fight that I felt utterly alone, overwhelmed, and defeated because I had no idea how I would win such an unbalanced fight. The victory in scarification did not come from me speaking against it; it came from groups like the APP who chose to take a stance and support what we were fighting against—even though it was outside of their focus on body piercing—the A.P.T.P.I. and all the individuals who helped us from overseas, from tattoo artists to body piercers, who were willing to stand behind us with nothing to gain. Our state's fight is done for now, but there will always be another one taking place. Individually, we might be body piercers, tattoo artists, modification artists, or whatever else we identify as, but if we don't learn to fight for each other as one unified industry, we will all suffer because of it.

Thank you so much to Steve Joyner for guiding us through this process, as well as the A.P.T.P.I, ABMA, and the countless individuals who reached out to make sure

that our very small group knew that we were not alone. A very special thank you to the APP for taking such a huge step by supporting us in keeping scarification a safe and regulated practice in our state.

¹ In our state, Branding is listed as a separate form of body art from scarification. Throughout this article, scarification is intended to specifically mean forms of cutting the skin to form an intentional scar as opposed to all forms of scarification in general.



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DALLAS SUSCON 2013



BETHRA SZUMSKI



Stelarc and Wings of Desire—Dallas Suscon 2013. Photo by Mark Kaplan.

Before I begin, I should make a special note: this was my first Suscon, ever. The event was held in Dallas, Texas from March 29 through 31, 2013. As in the past, it was organized by Allen Falkner and his team of hardworking volunteers. I've been to plenty of shows, two One Project campouts, and helped out with hook placement and cleanup, but I never really jumped into the middle of the suspension bed so-to-speak. So when I arrived, I appeared as most: not as an APP representative but as a student, eager to learn more about the art of suspension, and apparently I arrived just in time to witness and participate in a historic event.

The evening before the event began, representatives of attending groups gathered for a dinner and discussion.

Organized by Allen Falkner, the topic of discussion was about creating a non-profit organization that could serve as an official representation and a vehicle for advocacy for the art of suspension and its practitioners. The group voiced many concerns, both for and against organizing such a group (and all of which were valid). However, everyone agreed that they did not want to see suspension made illegal, and forming such a group could provide much needed representation with lawmakers. After much discussion, the general consensus was that organization—to a point—would be a good thing, though what comes next has yet to be decided.

As the event began, it quickly became apparent the focus of Suscon was to be a learning event. I took nu-

merous classes—from knot tying to suturing, intro to suspension, and basic rigging and rituals. While many more advanced courses were offered, including aseptic technique, bedside manner, and outdoor rigging to name a few, I stuck to the “newbie” ones. Whenever I wasn’t in class, I was being included in suspension set-ups. (Thanks to Dana Dinius and Chris Jennell—both team leads—for including me.)

One of the most memorable moments was the evening lecture and art suspension performed by Stelarc. During his lecture, he discussed and showed his art pieces and performances. (He referred to himself in these works as “The Body.”) Ripples of laughter went through the audience as he described how The Body was arrested by the NYPD after a guerilla suspension he performed, long before the practice became more common in cities around the world. When asked why he refers to himself in this way, he responded that he didn’t believe in the Freudian view of the self (i.e., the id, ego, and super-ego); instead, he believes in the idea of a digital self—one outside control of the physical body, where man and machine act in a symbiotic states. The suspension itself was stunning. After an hour of complex rigging, the group went up, all pushing back from a metal symbol in the center of the circle. The machinery amplified the sound of grinding metal, and gears jutted out as the bodies were raised and lowered. The lighting was cool and one had the sense of quiet non-presence, even as the shadows of the participants were cast upon the floor. The nagging, unvoiced question in my mind as his talk closed was: “So your saying the body contains no soul and your work is all about that idea?”

Being far from religious myself, my own experience with pain and ritual is still all about my body and soul in conversation, so it was absolutely fascinating to experience a view so philosophically different from my own and yet with similar practices.

The suspension community is unique as a body art group. For one, making a living from suspension is nearly unheard of; instead, it is a labor of love. Any money coming in generally goes to better equipment and promotion. Unlike other body arts, such as piercing or tattooing, suspension is performance art and ritual with practitioners coming from all kinds of backgrounds. (I met engineers, gymnastic instructors, IT specialists, professional riggers, hospital workers, an opera singer—I already knew her—and the list goes on and on.) This community has extended to include body art enthusiasts in a way no other has; in fact, many groups will only have one or two actual body modification practitioners. Napoleon once said that, in battle, “the moral is to the physical as three to one.” Loosely, this means that spiritual and

mental attributes, such as tenacity, morale, teamwork, dedication, and willpower, are far more important than numbers, equipment, hunger, or pain. Never has this felt more true than at Suscon 2013.

I had always imagined my first time at Suscon much like when a little girl thinks of her wedding day. I decided on Saturday that on Sunday (Easter) I would suspend; I put myself in the hands of fate and asked those who had so graciously made me part of their team—and those in my network—to guide me through. My goal was just to get up in the air, and I did—for two short bursts. As I came down, the beautiful faces around me were wet with tears. Someone said “that was so beautiful”. It felt beautiful, though I wasn’t able to push past the pain. Even so, this event was not simply a learning experience; for me, it was a rite of passage.

For more information about the event and attending teams, click [here](#). For information about suspension, in general, click [here](#).

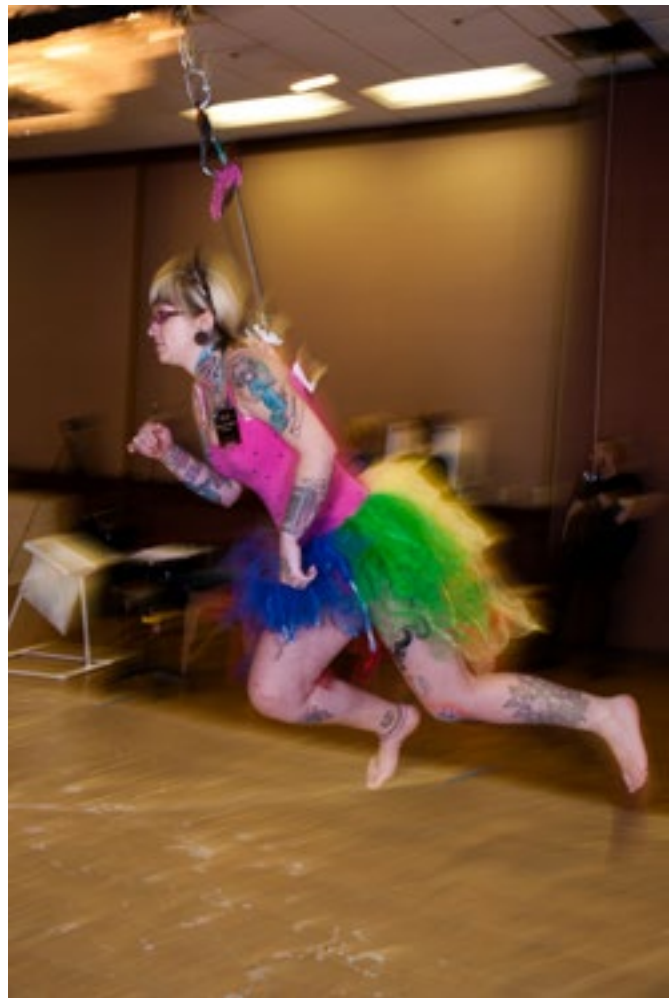


Photo by Mark Kaplan



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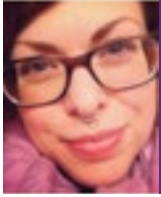
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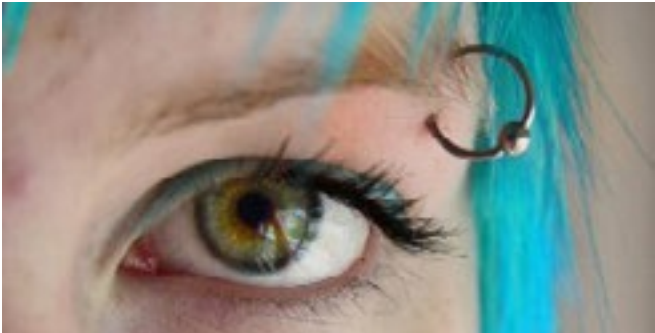


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CAN PIERCINGS CAUSE NICKEL ALLERGIES?



KENDRA JANE



Nickel allergies and metal sensitivities are one of the most common allergies. We, as piercers, see the effects of this allergy on a regular basis. It is an allergy that greatly affects one's ability to properly heal body piercings, as well as to maintain them in a healthy manner. A [study](#) was recently released by Skin and Allergy news which found that the risk of nickel and cobalt sensitivity increases in tandem with the number of body piercings. In other words, the more piercings you have, the more likely you are to develop nickel or cobalt sensitivities as a whole.

The study involved nearly 9,400 patch tested patients. From the data collected, they found that younger patients were more affected than older patients, and females were more likely to be affected than males. With that said, it was surprisingly found that when looking directly at body piercing as a cause of the allergy, even in ear lobes, the allergy was more common in males.

Since nickel is one of the most common allergens for patch tested patients, and—as stated above—body piercing has been directly correlated with the development of said allergy, it only makes sense that piercers should be very aware of the quality of metal they are putting into the piercings they deal with. Nickel is tightly bound up in many forms of stainless steel, especially those simply labeled surgical stainless steel, and once the allergy has developed one will see a marked sensitivity to the metal and need to avoid it. This means using jewelry that is nickel or cobalt free. However, there are many suitable nickel free options.

The only quality recommended for use by the APP for steel is that it is certified to meet ASTM or ISO standards

for surgical implant application, specifically ASTM F-138 or ISO 5832-1. Surgical steel can be made of a variety of alloys many of which are present in lower quality body jewelry and only a few specific grades are proven biocompatible. (The Association of Professional Piercers has developed these standards based on the most up-to-date studies, such as that above as well as the historical data available.) An alternative to steel is titanium, and while it is an excellent alternative, one must still look for surgical implant grade specifically (Ti6A14V ELI)—that is ASTM F136 or ISO 5832-2 compliant or commercially pure titanium at ASTM F67 compliant. There are also other options such as glass available for both new and healed piercings as well. For more information about APP approved body jewelry, please see the [Jewelry for Initial Piercings](#) or [Jewelry for Healed Piercings](#) brochures.

For more information about the study, click [here](#)

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