

THE POINT

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THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL

OF PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS

A portrait of a woman with dark hair, smiling. She has multiple piercings: a septum, a nostril, a lower lip, and a small one on her chin. She is wearing large, ornate gold earrings with spiral designs. Her neck and upper chest are covered in a large, intricate black and white tattoo of a skull with floral and geometric patterns. She is wearing a grey V-neck t-shirt with the word 'RITUAL' printed in bold black letters. Below the text is a large, detailed black and white mandala tattoo. Her arms are also heavily tattooed with various designs, including a large skull on her right arm and a large 'W' or 'M' shape on her left arm.

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FROM THE EDITORS

**MARINA PECORINO
KENDRA JANE B**
The Point Editors



• Marina Pecorino



Photo: Kendra Jane B.

What **WOULD**
Paul King do?

Sustainability touches many aspects of our daily personal and professional lives. In this issue, Kendra Jane provides tips for reducing our carbon footprint through structural improvements and office upgrades. Also, Jared Karnes of Onetribes discusses sustainability and his discovery of permaculture from a manufacturing perspective. Christina Shull shares some wisdom about how to establish a solid business and personal budget, with a focus on financial planning and retirement.

For the safety of our clients and ourselves, it is an unfortunate consequence that our industry is a heavy producer of waste. I've often been morbidly curious to know how much weight in garbage an average piercing room generates in a day, but that newfound knowledge would more than likely make me sad.

As we look toward the future of our profession and our planet, I think it's important to bring sustainability to the forefront of our minds. Some studios are taking on this chal-

lenge by reducing the use of supplies and tools, and thus reducing the need for additional processing and disposable products. For some piercers, this is a perfect solution, but for others, this may not be a change they're prepared to undertake.

There's also the unfortunate truth that our work takes an emotional and physical toll on us, making burnout a very real possibility. Long hours on our feet and standing in strange positions can lead to muscle fatigue and joint pain for many. Hectic days when breaks are scarce and meals may be a fantasy can leave us without the resources our body needs to maintain our pace. Add to that the emotional strain of taking on an especially challenging client, and you'll be ready for bed as soon as you get home. Even some of my most enjoyable and meaningful client experiences have left me feeling drained. If we intend to sustain this profession, it's important to remember our self-care regimen; as the Volunteer ducklings say, "What Would Paul King Do?"

• Kendra Jane B

When you hear the word "sustainability," your first thoughts might be of recycling soda cans or composting your vegetable scraps. However, the idea of sustainability is one that can be applied in a much broader sense to every aspect of life. Things such as maintaining a sustainable work life balance; which in our industry seems very difficult for many. Creating a healthy balance of piercing and non-piercing related activities is something I struggle with myself almost daily. However, I believe it is important to realize that we all need downtime and we all need to foster the passions we have in life outside of our piercing room. In the long run it makes us better piercers.

We can embrace the idea of sustainability in our piercing room by ensuring an ergonomic work environment to take as much stress off of our bodies as possible. We see many very industry specific issues that seem to arise due to the repetitive nature of our tasks. Making sure that you take care of your body will go a long way to ensuring a long and happy career.

We also need to build sustainable businesses by creating business plans and practices which ensure constant and continual growth at a calculated pace. Unchecked growth in a business is neither realistic nor sustainable, and therefore should be avoided.

We can also strive to lessen our overall carbon footprint within our shops. By making small changes in our environment and routines, we can lessen our impact on the planet. It can be as easy as not printing unnecessary receipts, switching to LED lightbulbs, or installing a lower flow toilet.

This issue will explore the idea of sustainability in its many forms and how it can impact our careers and the body modification industry in more ways than you may have thought possible. We would love to hear how you have made changes for a more sustainable career! Email us at editor@safepiercing.org



Photo: April Thomas

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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

JEFF SAUNDERS

APP President

As you may know, I currently serve as both President and Membership Liaison. I feel that this is a very exciting time to be involved in all aspects of APP Membership; there are more tools at our disposal than ever before.

Technological advances have made shooting videos and photographing documents easier than ever. In years past, a new applicant would have to shoot a VHS or DVD, along with photocopies of all of their compliance documentation. They would then ship it in the mail to our office, where it was forwarded to a person on our Membership Committee, who would review it. Then it would be shipped to a second person on our Membership Committee for review.

The volunteers within the APP work so hard to make the organization effective, and they have my sincere gratitude.

If an applicant made a small mistake, it could take months of letters and phone calls to make an important change and appropriately document it. Now, we can instantly respond with requests for missing documents or quick fixes of minor mistakes in an ap-

plicant's piercing studio. This means far fewer declination letters have to be sent over minimal errors. The Membership Committee sees these mistakes and then gets to engage in one-on-one health and safety education that makes a real difference in our community. The current Membership Committee (Cody Vaughn, Monica Sabin, Coyote Black, Johnny Velez, Aaron Pollack, Darrin Walters and now Sean Phillips) have my thanks for the amazing number of applications and renewals they have processed during my term as Membership Liaison.

It is impossible to fully understand the impact of internet forums, such as the Body Modification Learning Forum and the APP Non-Member Forum, in popularizing the use of safe jewelry and up-to-date health and safety practices. There was a time when jewelry compliance issues were the chief hurdle for most piercers in joining the APP. With these forums,

safe piercing jewelry has become more and more the norm in shops all over the world. This welcome exchange of ideas has illuminated the path to APP membership, but more importantly safer piercing practices worldwide.

The entire APP benefits from the assistance so many of our Members have given to prospective applicants. The volunteers within the APP work so hard to make the organization effective, and they have my sincere gratitude. I also want to say thank you to those of you within our organization and within our community that supply piercers with so much health and safety information and education. The growth our organization has experienced wouldn't have happened without you.

To maintain this growth and continue to fulfill our mission of health and safety education, the APP is taking steps to streamline the membership application process. We are doing this by developing a digital application which we are hoping to unveil very soon. This digital application should result in fewer missing documents, making each step easier for applicants to understand as well as committee members and the office staff to process. It is my hope that this simpler, digital application will allow the APP to continue growing the way it has over the past five years.

In addition to a digital application, the APP is in the process of automating certain aspects of membership compliance and recordkeeping. Soon, internal documents will be uploaded directly to Member records, and Members will be granted access to upload external documentation (like First Aid and CPR). These records will be available to the Membership Committee and APP staff for review. This is an ongoing project in the beta phase, but I have very high hopes that it will be a huge success in making membership accessible to more and more piercers, while also making maintaining membership even simpler.

Stay tuned over the next months as we hope to see these great projects revealed to the membership.



REDUCING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT IN THE PIERCING INDUSTRY

KENDRA JANE B
The Point Editor

The idea of being a more environmentally conscientious business is not new, although it is not necessarily the first thing you think of in reference to tattoo and piercing shops. At home maybe you are already living a greener life; upcycling, sorting your curbside recyclables, and buying your food locally. Meanwhile at work, the computer stays on all night, you use only one side of printer paper and the climate controls keep it a constant 68 degrees all year long. It's easy to let the green routine slide at work, since it's not technically your space. However, you may also fall on the other end of the spectrum, being the shop's outspoken green warrior. The nicest thing about working towards more sustainable business practices is that these changes can be eco-friendly while potentially reducing overhead costs. So even if the benefits to the planet are hard to see, those benefits to your bottom line may be more visible.

It is hard to know where you can improve if you don't take a measure of where you are currently. Some areas of your shop may be very green, while you may have room for improvement in other areas. Rather than just going into this with guesswork, I would encourage you to keep measurable data on how well you are doing in the sustainability realm. The simplest way is to use any one of many online carbon footprint calculators. Once you have done the calculations you will have a great baseline to work from. Although some of the ideas listed are small and easily implemented, others are larger and much more in depth undertakings. This means that it is important to remember this is not an all or nothing scenario and in fact each small thing you do to create a more sustainable shop environment will add up over time.

Let's start with the physical environment and structure of the studios we work in and own. This can be as easy or in-depth as you want it to be. On the simple and easily accomplished end of the list you can start with switching to LED and other energy-saving light bulbs; even a small change like this can create a measurable difference in your building's energy usage. The shop can purchase energy-saving models of office equipment, such as Energy Star-approved computers, LCD monitors, printers, and photocopiers. When your electronics have reached the end of their life,

make sure to recycle them through e-recycling companies or manufacturer take-back programs. Make sure the option you choose has some sound data-wiping procedures in place to keep your data secure.

You aren't working all hours of the night (at least I hope not), so why does your computer need to be on? Turn off everything you possibly can before you leave the office each day. Make sure to keep lights off in unused rooms throughout the day and turn off all lights when leaving. This can be simplified by installing motion sensor light switches where applicable, or consolidating electronic plugs so you are able to turn off minimal power strips or switches at the end of the day. Make use of power management options on electronics, such as programming the computer to turn off automatically at a certain time each night, just in case it is forgotten. You can also set your monitor to turn off after a few minutes of inactivity. And never leave things like cell phone chargers plugged in when you're not using them. They still draw energy, regardless of whether there's anything plugged into them.

One of the easiest things an office can do to reduce waste is to keep an eye on paper. Paper makes up about 35% of the waste stream—even though it's one of the easiest materials to re-use and recycle. You don't need to print every e-mail. Just organize your inbox to make e-mails easier to find and reference. You can encourage others not to print unnecessary paperwork as well. Make back-up copies of important files and keep them on an external drive or cloud storage, instead of storing boxes of paper files. When you do need to print important documents, make sure you use a sustainable paper, and set your printer or copier to print on both sides of the page.

The idea of going paperless is still a future reality for many places. That being said, many shops throughout the world have successfully gone to paperless options for waivers and aftercare. There are well known programs which will allow you to sign PDF files digitally, as well as create PDF documents with signature fields for clients to sign. There are also different digital programs made specifically for tattoo and piercing shops. In fact we even offered a class taught by Alicia Cardenas at our 2015 APP Conference about going paperless.

Second to the paperwork we create in our shops is the paper that just shows up. Junk mail may be one of the most wasteful things known to man. There are free services that will remove you from mailing lists, in hopes of eliminating waste before it starts. If recycling bins are not already easily accessible, this can be another quick, easy office upgrade. Put them near water coolers and next to the photocopier.

Another super easy addition to your sustainable shop arsenal is a digital thermostat with program functionality to lower the temperature when no one is in the shop. Take your heat conservation the extra step if your shop is located in a climate that would benefit from some winterizing; seal windows and doors so heat or cold air is not escaping and seal gaps in floorboards.

If studio structure improvements are possible, there are many things that can be done to increase the building's energy efficiency. Install insulated windows for better temperature regulation. Look into a tune up for the heating/cooling systems to make sure they are operating at peak efficiency. Buy energy-saving appliances that are Energy Star-rated or look into upgrading old equipment like inefficient boilers or furnaces. If you're lucky enough to be able to afford a shop remodel, go green from the floor to the skylights. Use eco-friendly flooring options made from renewable or recycled materials. Use sustainable fabrics made from hemp or bamboo for window coverings, or get them second hand. Lengths of bamboo make great curtain rods, too. The sustainable options are only as limited as your imagination.

Now that we have looked at a few simple things (and a couple more involved as well) let's step outside

of our own shop and look at what our neighbourhoods and cities offer. Working with other like minded businesses to support and cross promote one another is a great way to not only decrease your carbon footprint, but to increase your business. As an added bonus, you'll be building great relationships. Chances are, there are businesses in your area that are also trying to improve their sustainability. Network with them and use their services when you can. Part of being a green business is ensuring that your supply chain is green too. Seek out green vendors for your business needs, whether it is printing business cards, hosting your website, or manufacturing the products you sell.

Of course there are always additional steps you can take to make any shop more sustainable, and the only way to make progress is to know where you're headed. It is important to keep up with environmental news and green business trends to identify areas you can improve on. Making checklists of green business practices to implement and setting deadlines can ensure that things get completed in a timely manner. As you make changes, small or large, it is important to keep measuring this progress. As you make a major change, review energy consumption reports of the building and re-evaluate using carbon footprint calculators. It's easy to get gung-ho about being greener, only to have the efforts fall by the wayside when a busy time hits. Create a positive environment where positive change and growth towards sustainability is embraced even in an industry where being disposable is encouraged! Revel in the many ways we can work to reduce our carbon footprint.





FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY FOR YOUR BUSINESS

CHRISTINA SHULL

Business sustainability in the piercing industry generally requires financial planning, unless you plan on living with your parents for the rest of your life or you have landed a sugar daddy or mama. Knowing and doing what it takes to keep your finances in order is important. Regardless of whether you are a staff member or the owner of a studio, both positions require a healthy cash flow and good money management skills. I am going to lightly touch on a variety of financial planning topics that apply to everybody in the piercing industry and I encourage you to use this article as a jumping point to explore these topics and start working towards better financial success.

Understanding your cash flow is as important for staff members as it is for business

It is crucial that you truly know how much money is coming in and how much money is going out.

owners, although hourly or salaried employees do have an advantage in this due to having an income that can be more steady and predictable. It is crucial that you truly know how much money is coming in and how much money is going out. The understanding of your income to output is necessary to start budgeting and improving your financial situation. Take the time to estimate what you might spend on various purchasing categories and then compare that to what you ended up spending. You will probably be very surprised to find out how much you really do spend on certain things.

Some examples of different expenses as an individual or business owner can include:

- **Business:**
 - Inventory
 - Piercing supplies
 - Janitorial items
 - Payroll
 - Office supplies
 - Advertising, printing

- **Personal**
 - Groceries
 - Gas
 - Medical bills
 - Pet care/child care
 - Clothing
 - Entertainment and dining out

- **Both Personal and Business**
 - Rent
 - Insurance
 - Utilities
 - Loans
 - Telephone
 - Internet

Tracking your current spending habits can be done in a variety of ways. I can tell you from personal experience that the various apps available are easier for tracking personal spending. They are just so much simpler to use than trying to keep track of your spending habits on paper. I have tried a handful of different apps and discuss my two favorites below. There is no excuse for not trying out one or both of these apps, because both are available as free downloads.

Mint: Personal Finance, Budget, Bills & Money—This application is offered by the makers of Intuit and TurboTax, and if you have ever used programs from either company, you know that many of their products are straightforward and easy to use. This program provides a more complete picture of your finances by bringing together your bank accounts, credit cards, bills and investments so you can get an overview of where you are at. There are also some great features such as staying up to date on your credit score (and getting pointers for how to improve it), bill payment reminders (to decrease the likelihood of being late on a payment), and the ability to create budgets. My favorite thing about this program is that you can sync your various financial accounts with Mint, so your financial transactions are automatically updated and you only need to manually enter cash transactions.

Every Dollar: Budget, Manage Money, Track Spending—This application is offered by money management professional, Dave Ramsey, who is one of the leading experts on financial planning for retirement and eliminating debt. This is a great program for budgeting, and I love the ease in which you can view how your monthly spending was planned, compared to how much has been spent and how much is remaining. However, you cannot sync this with your financial accounts unless you pay a \$9.99 monthly subscription to *EveryDollar Plus*. I like the formatting and ease of entering and editing transactions a little more in this program.

Overall, I personally favor the Mint program more due to the free financial account syncing and additional features offered.

Once you have a sense of how much money you are making versus how much you are spending, you can start budgeting. I know budgeting sounds boring, but trust me: it is going to make a world of difference in your financial future. It is easy to casually spend money as things come up. Planning your spending for the month makes it is much harder to randomly spend money, allowing you to strategically cut from one or more categories as necessary. For example: you will be more likely to think twice about blowing a hundred dollars on things you don't need when you start deducting that amount from your grocery money. When you have the basic budgeting down it is time to start adding in some new expenses that might not be in your current budget. Putting money into a savings account monthly or even bi-weekly is one of the easiest things you can do to start creating short-term financial stability. Having an emergency fund can be vital to staying on track financially if you experience a setback. These emergency savings can keep you from going into debt if you end up with unexpected medical bills, home or auto repairs, sudden unemployment, or any of the other stressful surprises that life can throw your way. When I first started my business, I was hardly paying myself because I invested most of my business income back into my studio. Even then, I started by setting aside \$50 a month. Later on, I bumped it up to \$100 a month, which wasn't missed much from each paycheck even though I was only paying myself a small salary.

Setting aside money for your taxes is another crucial part of your budgeting and planning. Whether we are talking about individual or business taxes, it is a wise decision to set the money aside for when they are due. If temptation to spend the money is too great, there are a handful of ways to minimize the tempta-

tion. Increasing the amount of taxes that are deducted from your paycheck is the easiest way to have your taxes paid in full at the end of the year or at least get close. Maybe you'll even get a return! If the money is taken off your check before you even cash it, you won't have to worry about the money burning a hole in your pocket. This works well for hourly employees and salaried workers alike, and is very easy to setup and update as needed. Since direct deposit can usually be setup to transfer money into multiple accounts, I personally have my salary automatically deposited into two separate accounts. Every two weeks, one account gets half of my mortgage payment and the other account gets the rest of the money. This allows me to always have money set aside for when my mortgage is due. If you're doing the math, you'll realize that I am also able to make one additional full mortgage payment a year on this system, which has a very positive impact on my loan principal, especially early in the agreement. Having money automatically transferred into savings, or into an account for taxes, is a great way to avoid the temptation of spending the money. Talk with your accountant about paying quarterly or even monthly if you are not currently required to do so. This is especially helpful for independent contractors and certain business entities that only need to pay their taxes after the end of the calendar year. These smaller and more frequent payments can feel more manageable and attainable to many people.

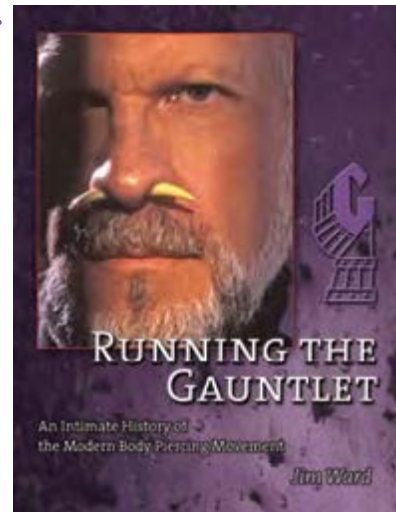
Eliminating debt is a big aspect of financial success and happiness. Budgeting and planning is the most effective way to start chipping away at debt. You can find a lot of wonderful and manageable tips on eliminating debt through a wide variety of books and programs. On a very minimal salary, I paid off tens of thousands of dollars of debt that I had acquired before I became a business owner. I was also able to use these techniques to improve my financial situation enough to purchase a home less than two years after I opened my business. There are many different approaches and theories for the best way to pay off debt and these techniques alone could be an entire series of articles.

Want quick suggestions? Create projections and plan accordingly. Don't let your tax burden at the end of the year be a total surprise that results in scrambling to come up with the money. If you are a business owner, you are most likely required to pay taxes quarterly or monthly, as mentioned above. If you are an independent contractor, you should be planning for when you need to pay your taxes. Talk with an accountant, SCORE mentor, tax advisor, or other professional who can help you

There are plenty of resources available to help you come up with a financially successful plan, including a plethora of information on the internet, investing and financial planning classes, countless books and programs, and various business professionals. Talk with friends and colleagues as well, maybe they have some great ideas and insight that you can adapt. It is never too early to start working towards a brighter financial future!



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SUSTAINABILITY—LEARNING TO CULTIVATE

JARED KARNES

Onetribes

Growing up, if given the chance, I hurried toward the forest at any available opportunity. I would stand in stillness, watching the sunlight filter down through the tree canopy with the branches swaying in the wind. It was obvious to me that I was a part of something larger. I knew I belonged here and that the sun, wind, trees, and myself were always changing. I could see, both physically and mentally, the connections between places, wildlife, and people. In school while learning biology and earth sciences, I discovered scientific validation for my feeling that we needed to pay more attention to the effects that our actions have, not just on the people around us, but everything else.

I started *Onetribes* at the end of 2002 and beginning 2003, in the midst of a growing “green” movement. A philosophy of conservation and awareness for nature manifested in several aspects of my business; using soy inks and recycled packaging as well as shredding our junk mail for padding our shipments. As the years progressed, I dedicated considerable resources to building our local showroom using as many

green materials as possible. Sustainability was the new buzz and we were all in. Onetribes was

growing, and we frequently (and sometimes heatedly) discussed the extent to which sustainability would influence our decisions. Body modification had become both a personal obsession and a way to make a living. Unfortunately, I found it increasingly difficult to reconcile capitalism with environmental and social sustainability. As my responsibilities grew, it became harder to hold onto that youthful connection with the world and sustainability became a source of stress. I felt guilt and constant tension between growing a business and reducing my impact on the environment.



Multi-Piece Mayan Jade Ear Flares by Onetribes. Photo by Jared Karnes

We had a garden when I was young, and thankfully I’ve never forgotten how amazing it is to watch a seed grow into food. I was reintroduced to gardening during business travel through Southeast Asia, and I started exploring the environmental and social impacts of industrial agriculture and subsistence farming. At home, as the conversation about local food, food access, and community self-sufficiency began to grow, I dove headfirst into the urban agriculture movement and co-founded a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to nutrition education and food activism. It was during this period that, quite by accident, I stumbled onto the concept of Permaculture. One day, a wrong turn led to an invitation for tea at a stranger’s house and a conversation that began to change my view of sustainability.

To put it simply, Permaculture is an agricultural design framework based on the concept of interconnectedness. It is meant to closely mimic the diversity and balance found in our natural environment. Permaculture has value in the larger context of our lives because it is grounded in the pursuit of an equitable existence. I realized Permaculture could provide an ethical framework for making decisions about how my actions influenced the world around me, and I believed that these prin-

ciples were the key to a true sense of sustainability. However, the more research and planning I did, the more I felt something was missing from my sustainability equation.

I am constantly looking at both the past and the current world around me for jewelry design inspiration. I have a particular interest in Mesoamerican cultures, and over the course of years spent admiring their artwork, I have noticed the frequent depiction of important plants in jewelry and crafts. You may be pleased to learn that body modifying cultures, and in particular those cultures of the Americas, domesticated the majority of the plants we eat today. The connections between body modification and the history of agriculture fascinated me, and I became obsessed with the ethnobotanical aspects of the cultures from which many of our body modification practices are descended. It is possible to find mythology containing reverence for plants and the greater environment in cultures from the Americas to China and everywhere in between. As humanity came to know our environ-

ment through interaction and discovery, we began to learn more about how the world worked, our place in it, and how we could change it both for better and for worse. We understood and appreciated our dependence on our place. I discovered that the thread connecting these cultures is a universal feeling of “the sacred.” A rooted sense that we depend on and are intimately connected to our place.

The sense of interconnectedness and interdependence that I experienced as a child in the woods, a feeling that you may have had at some point in your own life, is missing from our conversations about sustainability. Permaculture sometimes felt methodical and cold until I had the insight that it was a tool, rather than an inspiration. I had lost my connection with the sacred. That feeling had faded as I became a workaholic business owner. Sustainability became something I did and not something I lived, and my definition of sustainability had not been broad enough to encompass myself and my own needs and relationships. The realization that true sustainability begins with making

The concept of cultivation as purposeful attentiveness and care that starts with ourselves and radiates outward is a powerful and empowering world view.





Onetribes Lithicoins—a new way to collect stones for reference and inspiration

space in our lives for these connections has allowed me to balance my personal and business needs while still minimizing my overall impact on the world.

While developing these ideas, I came to love the word “cultivate” to describe my belief that the concepts of permaculture combined with a personal connection to our place can allow us to care for ourselves and what’s around us simultaneously. The concept of cultivation as purposeful attentiveness and care that starts with ourselves and radiates outward is a powerful and empowering world view. It offers an opportunity to view ourselves and our businesses as small parts of a larger whole and identify our relationships and opportunities in a more organic way. It also encourages us to take responsibility for the negative impacts we impose on the world and actively design our existence rather than being passengers.

The Core Tenets of Permaculture

- Care for the Earth—We can’t thrive unless the eco-systems we rely on are thriving.

- Care for People—Everyone deserves access to the resources needed for survival.
- Return of Surplus—Sometimes referred to as “Fair Share,” this is one of the tenets that is most at odds with traditional capitalism. Return of surplus dictates that we reinvest surpluses back into our systems to benefit earth and people.

Some guiding principles from Permaculture:

- Observe and Interact: Only when we take time to carefully observe will we fully realize the extent of our relationships with people and place, and proactively cultivate success. I had a conversation in 2016 with Badur Ramji from PunkMedics about the lack of data collection in our industry, but I recently read an [article](#) by Jim Weber about his studio sharing graphs and observations about their customer base and this is a promising step forward. It’s easy to extend this into visualizing our positive and negative impacts, also.

- Catch and Store Energy: Energy is a resource that flows between entities in a system. Maximizing storage and use, whether it’s rainwater, solar power, or our own personal energy (I’m looking at you, seven day a week piercers) creates more stable outcomes. On the business front, energy takes the form of resources or capital. Making some effort to catch and store allows us to take advantage of positive opportunities, sustain through slow seasons, or make positive impacts within our communities (return of surplus).
 - Obtain a Yield: Define and work toward goals. When I plant a garden, I start by understanding how much food I want for myself and others and work backward from there. In business, plan for sustainable growth and profit to catch and store or redirect into our communities.
 - Produce No Waste: I have found this is easier in personal life than in business. How many pairs of gloves you use in a week is not as important as the safety of your customer, but where can you work to offset this impact? Is there any waste that can be reused or repurposed? Even knowledge can be considered waste or byproduct. This article is a byproduct of learning to run my business.
 - Use and Value Diversity: Diversity creates robust and stable ecosystems, and this benefit has been identified in human societies as well. Engage with your community to increase diversity in both your personal and business life. Diversifying personal relationships makes us well rounded, compassionate, and useful people. Diversity in business leads to more stable income streams and less risk.
 - Use edges and value the marginal: Often the edges of an ecosystem (where water meets land or field meets forest) contain the most activity and thus opportunity. Look to the fringes of your social circle and your business to discover opportunities for growth and ways to continue cultivating yourself and your community.
 - Creatively Use and Respond to Change: Everything around us is constantly changing and this is really the essence of life. Embracing this rather than fighting it has given me a much more open and cooperative view of the world and my place in it.
- In addition to reading and understanding these guidelines, it’s important to understand how to implement them. Through observation and interaction with my customers over the years, I’ve realized that

many of them love to collect stones. I also know many people who love my work but cannot wear it, and I would love to engage those folks by using the edges and valuing the margins of my business to expand my reach. I have become good at catching and storing energy in the form of rough materials, and noticed many of them are not often collected. I have been looking for a way to utilize materials not suitable for jewelry in an effort to produce no waste. I believe this is especially important because resources have already been used to bring these materials to my door. My business landscape is changing as some of my long time employees have moved on to fulfill their own goals. In an effort to creatively use and respond to change, I designed a new product that allows me to obtain a yield from all of my existing tools, skill sets, and materials. My [Lithicoins](#) collectible stone coin project launched recently and I have realized the value of diversity by growing my customer base and creating new income from existing resources, all with little negative impact. Coming full circle, an intangible but very important aspect of this is a larger platform to connect with others by using natural materials to inspire a greater closeness to the earth.

Sustainability, which I once viewed as simply a matter of reduce, reuse, and recycle, has become a constantly evolving process of cultivation.

While my businesses are what I do to sustain my family, they are also a tool I use to care for the earth and the people around me. No system is perfect, and it would be an outright lie for me to imply that my lifestyle and business actions cause zero harm to other beings or places. Acknowledging this is a first step for all of us. Sustainability, which I once viewed as simply a matter of reduce, reuse, and recycle, has become a constantly evolving process of cultivation. I have learned to view sustainability as being not just about the environment, but about me, you, and everything else. I genuinely believe that humanity can prosper while reducing our negative impacts and allowing our world to thrive. It will not happen passively, though. It is not possible to build peace and prosperity on a foundation of destruction. We must fall in love with the world around us and take proactive steps to design our society rather than being passengers in a society built to move us from birth through consumption and death with little regard for the impact. We must learn to cultivate.



PIERCING STATISTICS

JAMES WEBER
Infinite Body Piercing

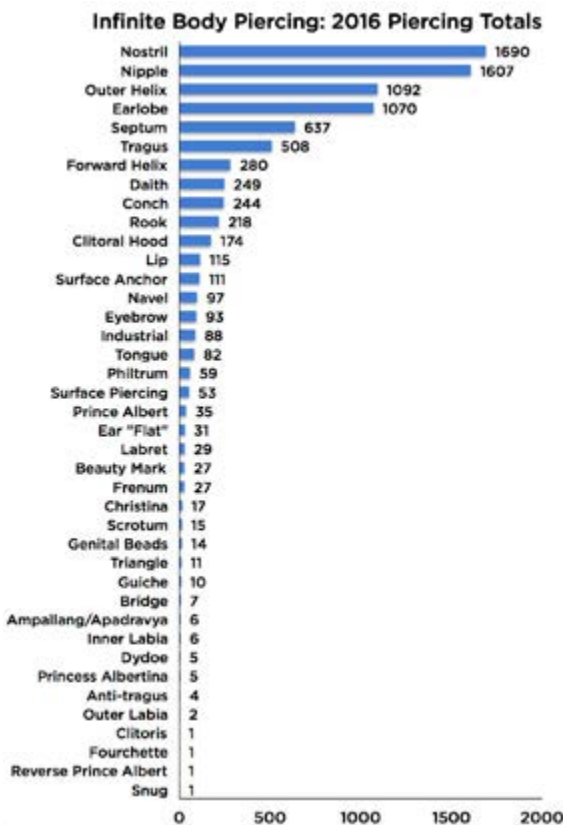


For several years, adult video streaming site Pornhub has released statistics on the viewing habits of their users. Wondering what search terms are most popular with online porn consumers? What country has the highest percentage of female viewers? Who the most-searched fictional movie characters are? How much viewership dips during the Super Bowl? Want to know how each of last year's Presidential debates affected porn viewing in the United States? It's all in [PornHub's 2016 Year in Review](#). Regardless of your attitudes or tastes regarding adult films, it is fascinating to see a snapshot—albeit from a single, English-language adult site—about adult video viewing habits worldwide. In this spirit, we decided to take a look at our own 2016 piercing statistics for the services we offer at the studio. While we don't have access to the tremendous user data and demographic breakdown that Pornhub does, we can easily break down the number and type of services we provided in 2016 through our POS system.

First, it's important to note that new piercings aren't the only service we offer; we change jewelry and stretch piercings for clients, free of charge, regardless of whether the original piercing was done at our studio. (Just tip your piercer!) It's a continuing service for our returning customers, and a bit of outreach to customers we haven't pierced—at least not yet. As a result, we did a whopping 4,062 jewelry insertions and piercing stretches in 2016. That's 338.5 jewelry insertions per month, a

little over 78 per week, and on average over 11 per day—and that's in addition to clients we see for piercings. In 2016, 32% of our services were jewelry insertions, with piercings making up 68% of what we did last year.

2016 Total Piercings, by Type



In total, the piercers here at Infinite did 8722 piercings in 2016. This works out to an average of 727 piercings per month, 168 per week, and 24 piercings per day. If you add in our 4,062 jewelry insertions and piercing stretches, that comes to an average of 1065 procedures per month, 246 each week, and 35 clients per day, every day!

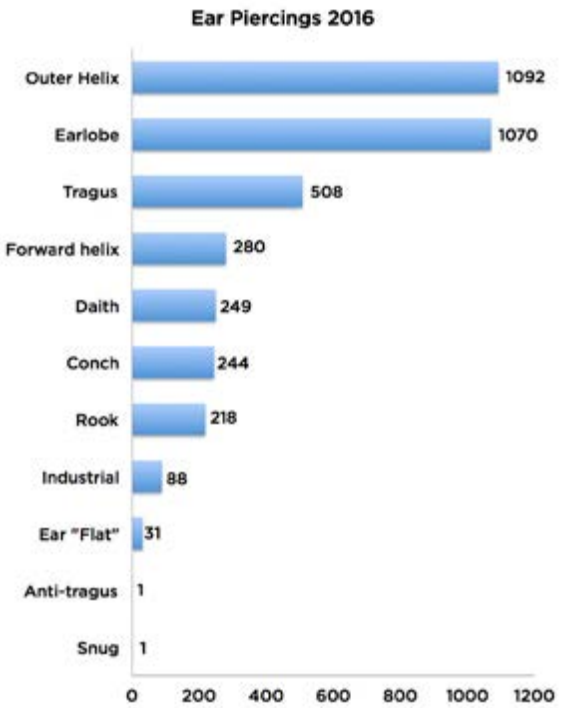
After jewelry insertions, the top five services we performed for clients were, in order: nostril piercings, nipple piercings, outer helix piercings, earlobe piercings, and then septum piercings.

Repeating the results in 2015, nostril piercings were the most popular service we offered in 2016. We performed 1690 of them, just behind our 2015 number of 1697 nostril piercings. For the second year in a row, the nostril piercing is king—or queen, really, since the overwhelming majority of our nostril piercing clients are women.

Our second most popular piercing is the nipple. In all we did 333 single nipple piercings and 637 double nipple piercings—making for 1607 nipples pierced in 2016. Not surprisingly, in third and fourth place for most-requested piercings in 2016 were outer helix piercings and earlobe piercings, with 1092 and 1070 performed respectively. Rounding out the top five was septum piercings, with 637 done in 2016. You can see a breakdown of everything we did in 2016, below.

Two piercings absent from this year's list that were on last year's are tongue webbing piercings (we did eleven in 2015) and cheek piercings (we did four that year). This could be because people didn't request them, or the piercing staff talked clients out of them. (They are both problematic piercings: the tongue webbing for keeping it from migrating; and cheek piercings for getting them to heal.) Or maybe it's a little bit of both.

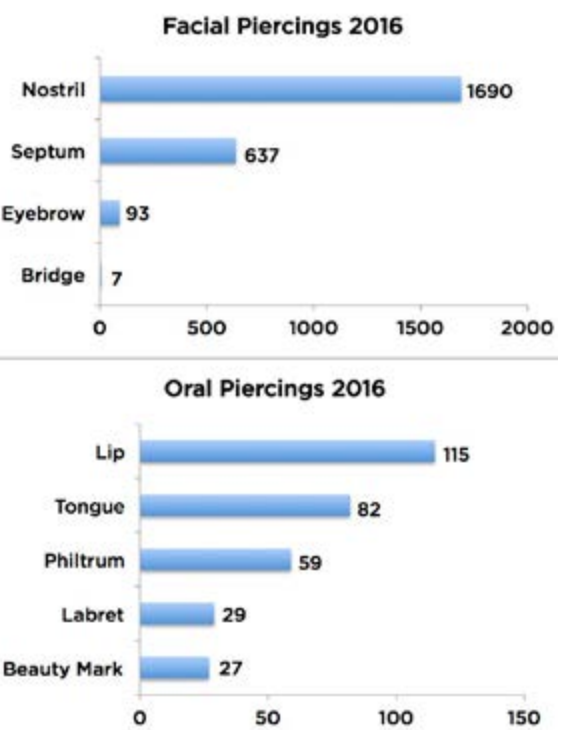
Ear Piercing Numbers



It's no surprise that a lot of what we do are different ear piercings. The breakdown of ear piercings done in 2016 is below:

We did 3,785 ear piercings in 2016. This works out to over 315 ear piercings per month, almost 73 per week, and an average of 10.3 ear piercings every day. These accounted for approximately 44.4% of total piercings.

Facial and Oral Piercings

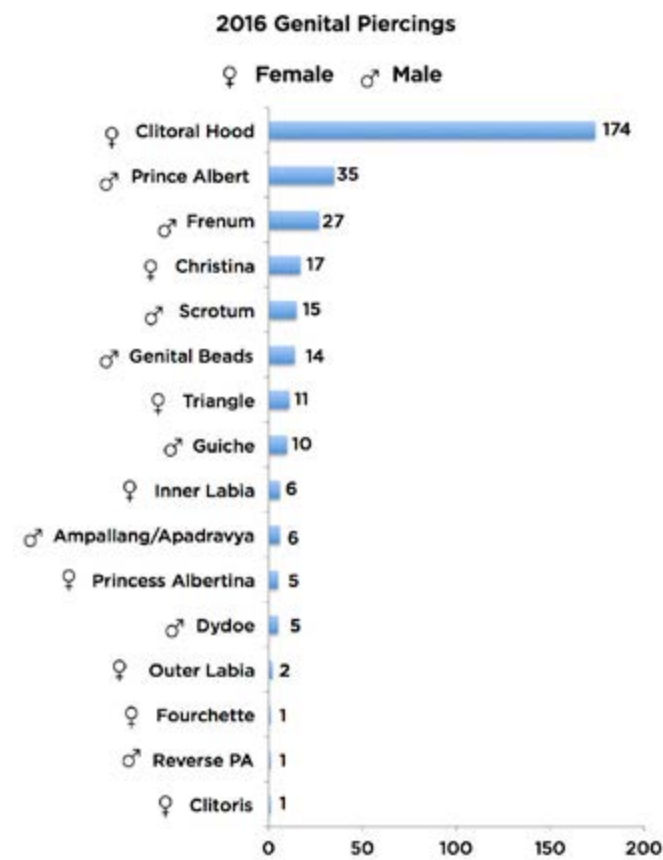


We performed 2427 different non-ear facial piercings in 2016, including nostril, septum, eyebrow, and bridge piercings, and 312 oral piercings, including lip, labret, beauty mark, philtrum, and tongue piercings. Facial piercings accounted for approximately 28% of total piercings, while oral piercings accounted for under 4%.

Genital Piercing Numbers

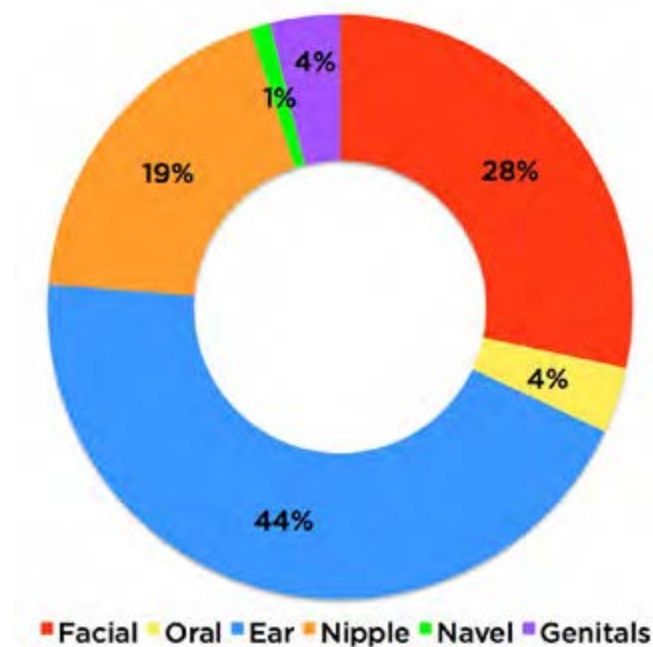
330 genital piercings were performed in 2016: 217 female genital piercings, and 113 male genital piercings. Measured against our total numbers, genital piercings account for just under 4% of our total piercings.

The most popular female genital piercing, by a large margin, was the clitoral hood piercing—it was number eleven on the overall list of most popular piercings—with a surprising five Princess Albertina piercings done last

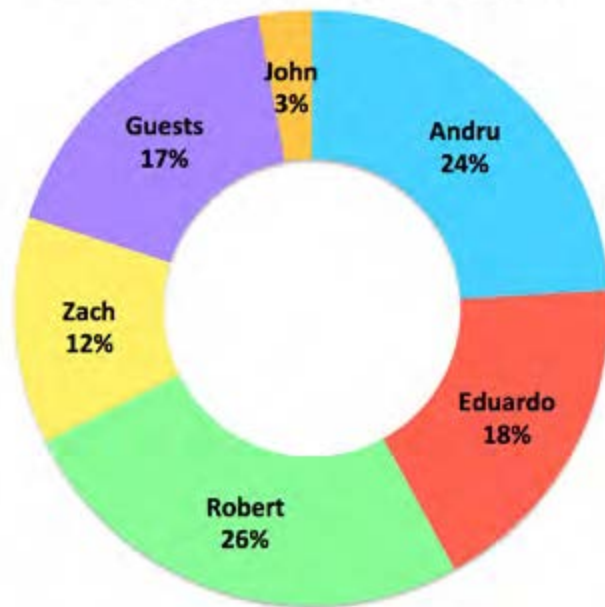


year. The most popular male genital piercing was the Prince Albert piercing, followed closely behind by the frenum piercing. Robert and Ed also inserted fourteen genital beads on nine different clients.

Piercing Totals by Category and Piercer



Percentage of Piercing Totals by Piercer



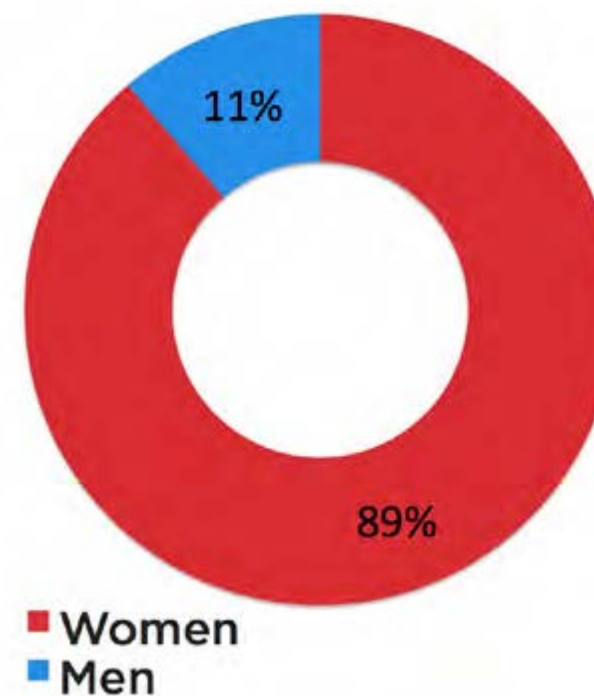
How does this break down by category? Facial piercings account for 28% of what we did last year, oral piercings 4%, ear piercings a whopping 44%, nipple piercings 19%, genital piercings 4%, and navel piercings a small 1% of our totals.

It goes without saying that we do a lot of piercings. We're not the average studio though. We've been in business over twenty years, we have an amazing staff and reputation, and we're also in a large city (the fifth largest in the United States) without a lot of competition. (Restrictive zoning regulations limit the number of tattoo and piercing studios in most areas of Philadelphia.) As a result, we're easily one of the busiest piercing studios in the U.S., and these numbers are in no way indicative of the volume of clients seen in an "average" studio, if there even is such a thing, so these numbers shouldn't be seen as representative of the volume of services performed at other studios.

We have four piercers on staff—with two scheduled together on weekdays and all four scheduled and rotating through weekend shifts—with various guest piercers helping us out during any staff transitions and/or during extended vacation times with our regular staff. If we track the piercing totals by piercer, you get a breakdown of the percentage of piercings performed by each member of our piercing staff. Robert and Andru both saw a quarter of last year's clients, with Eduardo seeing slightly less. (As head piercer at the studio, Ed's responsibilities often mean some of the other piercers are seeing clients while Ed is taking care of other press-

ing matters at the studio.) We had a few months at the beginning of the year, between the departure of John Logger and the hiring of Zach, when we had quite a few guests seeing clients at the studio. You can see the breakdown with the accompanying chart.

Our Clients, by Gender



Who are the people coming in for our services? Unfortunately, we don't have detailed demographic data on our clients, such as age or location. We can pore over release forms for much of this information, but that is prohibitively time-consuming. What we have done, though, is go through last December's clients' forms to determine the gender breakdown of our customers. While it's obvious more women than men come in for our services, it was surprising to find out just how big the discrepancy is. An overwhelming percentage of our clients are women, in reality just under 90%, while a little over 10% of our piercing clients are men. This also includes our numerous trans clients. (This is why we refer to "female" or "male" genital piercings, but break down our clients between "men" and "women.") We also have quite a few clients who identify outside of the gender binary, but at this time their numbers are few when compared to the total client numbers.

UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY

AARON POLLACK



This has been an exciting year so far for the APP. First off, thank you to everyone who participated in our 2016-17 Elections. These elections were to fill four positions on the Board of Directors. Steve Joyner, Jef Saunders, and Cody Vaughn will all be returning for second terms on the Board. Brian Skellie will be joining the Board at the conclusion of Conference 2017. Congratulations!

Camp APP hosted a great group discussion on the potential to add rose gold to the initial piercing jewelry standard for Membership. After discussion with APP Members, past board members, and jewelry manufacturers, the Board voted to include the following in the [Initial Piercing Jewelry Standard for Membership](#):

"Gold (yellow, white, or rose) is appropriate for initial piercings if it is solid 14k or 18k, alloyed for biocompatibility, and free from nickel or cadmium. Gold higher than 18k is too soft for body jewelry because it can easily be scratched or nicked. Gold lower than 14k, gold plated, gold-filled, or gold overlay/vermeil jewelry is not acceptable for fresh piercings."

Registration is now open for the [22nd annual APP Conference & Exposition](#)! Check your email for your invite, or through our website at www.safepiercing.org to get registered.

In contrast to our lack of more detailed information on our clients, Facebook has excellent (insidious?) tools for demographics. Through our page analytics, we're able to get an age breakdown of our Facebook fans: 50% are aged 25-34; 22% are aged 18-24; 17% aged 35-44; 8% are over 45 years old, with less than 3% under 18 years old. Unfortunately, this most likely says more about Facebook's audience than ours.

Whew! Congratulations if you've made it this far. Statistics can be either fascinating or tedious, and we hope we've presented these in enough of an engaging way that everyone can geek out on these numbers as much as we did.

This article is republished from the Infinite Body Piercing [website](#).



Top to bottom: our sign; our first hearse, a chevy, with flower's; 1994—my dad and I posing. I wore black, skirts, and thick stockings to cover my tattoos.



CONFESSIONS OF A FUNERAL DIRECTOR

ANGIE VAN DIJKEN

While I was growing up, my parents started their own funeral business. My dad was a sacristan and had several jobs to make it happen. In those times, we were stereotyped as crows who wore top hats and long, black frocks. My mom was the one with all the necessary licensing and qualifications, but she wasn't allowed to perform funerals. The industry was accustomed to funeral directors being men, so initially my mother worked mostly behind the scenes. In this farmer's region, change is not accepted quickly. Being the first female funeral director in the area, it was difficult for my mother to prove herself to others in the funeral business locally. We were viewed as the competition, rather than colleagues or friends. As an example, a

group of pallbearers were shared between several undertakers; we were often last when it came to planning. As a result, we were often short on people when pallbearers were needed. It was a constant struggle and respect was not easily earned. Yet, my parents persevered and built a name for themselves in the region.

As a kid, I always helped out after school to earn extra allowance, so I already knew the ropes. When my parents expanded the business with a new hearse, my dad asked me to become the driver. At the time, I had no formal education and was working as a bartender; I took his offer. Despite my past involvement with the industry, I had to prove myself to the men who drove hearses for other directors, similar to what my mother had to do. As a young woman in the role normally assumed

by men, I worked hard to earn that respect. They saw how well I could handle the car - I could turn, twist it in any corner or small road. The competition was still intense between funeral directors. No one would offer any guidance, and even though people are free to choose their funeral homes, if rival directors noticed you were encroaching on their territory they would go so far as to slander you to potential clients.

After over eighteen years of working as a licensed care and body restorator and manager of the company, when the time came my brother and I didn't want to take over the business. We grew up in the field, but it was never the career either of us would have chosen. We stayed at our jobs until our mother retired in 2012. In preparation for her retirement, I started to seek a new career path and began an apprenticeship at a local tattoo shop in 2010. Tattoos and piercings always inspired me. Even though I had to hide my body art, I loved having it and always dreamt about owning my own shop. It might be weird to say considering my previous line of work, but I guess I have always had an interest in working with bodies.

So I started to seek and absorb every piece of information that I could find on piercing in an attempt to gain as much knowledge about it as possible. I quickly established that I couldn't find much about it in Holland. Thankfully, the world seems a whole lot smaller thanks to things like the internet and Facebook. I started to read all kinds of educational forums and websites, as well as befriend other piercers via social media. The longer I dug around, the more amazed I became in regards to this industry. Colleagues have been very friendly, taking time to answer any questions I have. I've sent countless messages through Facebook and gotten many helpful answers from so many people. I was nervous to attend my first BMXnet Conference because I didn't know anyone, but again, people were friendly and caring, right from the start. Piercers are genuinely interested in you and open for a conversation, which is so much different than what I was used to from the funeral industry.

After almost seven years of piercing, meeting many more people, and learning what they

all do to help the industry, I'm still impressed by it. Colleagues work together, educate each other, and share information, no matter who you are. Whether you're just getting started or you've been a piercer for years, there's always someone that will cheer for you or push you harder to reach your goals. In our industry, people will make you feel at home while reminding you that if you stand still, you don't get anywhere. If you really want to get somewhere you need to work hard and fight for it. However, most piercers understand that it's a whole lot easier if you have help. I know there are many different industries out there and competition can be hard, but after comparing my experiences in these industries, I'm happy and proud to be a piercer!



Top: my brother and me at work eating coffee and cake; Bottom: my mom and brother receiving the best funeral home certificate



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

CHRISTINA SHULL

In the last three months, following the debut of the Legislation and Regulatory Affairs Committee column in *Issue 77 of The Point*, there have not been many new actions to report. For many states, very little happens on a regulatory level at the beginning and end of the calendar year. This tends to be a time when many government agencies are winding down their fiscal year and budgeting tends to be tight. The end of the year is also a time when scheduling issues frequently arise due to federally observed holidays between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.

While the Legislation and Regulatory Affairs Committee has not been very active assisting with new regulations or legislation recently, the timing worked out well with our Committee Chair, Steve Joyner having knee surgery in November. If there was ever a good time to be out of commission, a slower time for the committee is probably as good a time as it could get. Luckily, Steve's surgery went well and he's back in action! However, please note that while new regulations and legislation have been sparse these last few months, some of our committee members have ongoing regular involvement in Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) and National Environmental

Health Association (NEHA) projects which were both discussed at greater length in the previous column.

Some members of the Legislation and Regulatory Affairs Committee have been using the slow season to work on a substantial and exciting project. Over the last several months, "save the date" postcards for the 2017 APP Conference were sent to various health department officials in the hopes of generating interest before state budgets were finalized. The APP offers a free Conference pass (with the exception of the "piercer only" classes) to health department officials who book in the [APP room block](#). A printable copy of this postcard may be downloaded [here](#). Feel free to share it with your local health department officials. With our recent outreach efforts and your help, we hope to increase the attendance of these officials at future Conferences.

Now that we are a few months into 2017, legislation is starting to picking up momentum. Work has begun with a new state, in addition to the states and countries that we have been in touch with previously. If you know of regulations or legislation being added or reworked in your area, please contact us at legislation@safepiercing.org.



22ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION

June 11-16, 2017

at Bally's Hotel And Casino,
Las Vegas, NV



Click on one of these images to download a printable copy of this postcard.



ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS
POST OFFICE BOX 1287 / LAWRENCE, KS 66044

www.safepiercing.org
888-888-1277 / info@safepiercing.org

Free full conference pass (a \$450 value) when you book your room in the APP room block at the host hotel.

A full conference pass offers access to over 40 piercing-specific classes, workshops, roundtable discussions, and APP Talks including:

- ▶ Health Inspector Meeting. This is an opportunity for health inspectors and members of the APP Legislation and Regulatory Affairs Committee to meet and discuss pertinent issues.
- ▶ Safe Practices in the Piercing Room and the Sterilization Room
- ▶ Studio Documentation
- ▶ Wound Healing Dynamics and Aftercare
- ▶ Legislation
- ▶ Basic Steel, Titanium, and Niobium

SAVE THE DATE!





SILVER ANCHOR

SHAWN PORTER

Sacred Debris



A jeweler at Silver Anchor, circa 1980s.

Editor's Note: This article was compiled by Kendra Jane Berndt from existing sources written by Shawn Porter. In addition to writing for Modblog, Shawn also edits [Occult Vibrations](#) tattoo blog as well as his personal diary at [Sacred Debris](#). Without his collection of writings, photographs, and personal accounts much of the history of body piercing would not be documented and archived as it currently is. I would like to thank Shawn for his continued work, as I was only able to compile the following because of his work.

Zephyrhills, Florida was first incorporated as a city in 1914. According to the 2000 Census it was home to 10,833 residents, many of whom were over 65 and retired. It's close to Tampa and to my hometown of Plant City, and can boast to being the birthplace of several famous NASCAR drivers, an American Idol finalist, and notorious [Ghoul Carl Tanzier](#). It was also, for a few years at least, the Body Modification capital of the world.

Far from the cultural meccas of the West Coast, Zephyrhills was where advanced body modification pioneer Mr.

Jay (Jack Yount) settled after his wife passed away and he retired from American Standard Plumbing, where his only full apprentice Mike Natali lived and where famed 'Modification Doctor' Ronald Brown made frequent visits for underground surgery. It was also the home base of Big Ed Fenster and the Silver Anchor Body Jewelry Company.

At the time finding body piercing jewelry was no easy task. In the 1980s and early 1990s manufacturing companies were few and far between. It was not available at every mall or website, and most tattoo shops didn't have piercers to buy it from/install it for you. The Gauntlet, Spain's Customs, Pleasurable Piercing, The Good Art Company, Toucan for gold, Wildcat in the UK, and Fenster's Silver Anchor were the big names at the time. Pre-internet. Some had catalogs while others had stapled and xeroxed price sheets, included with your order. When I first started buying from Silver Anchor they didn't even have a retail price list since they only served wholesale clients. Big Ed Fenster, a nudist, swinger, and friend of both Jack



Ed Fenster

and Sailor Sid Diller, owned the business. Silver Anchor shared its name with Sid's Ft. Lauderdale tattoo studio and was located in a small house that served as the office and Ed's living quarters. There were a few satellite trailers where the jewelry was manufactured.

Twenty something years later I still contend that Silver Anchor produced the finest quality body jewelry of all of the companies that were around back then. Open to interpretation I know, but during their "good years" with Mike Natali as GM and his partner Chuck as shop manager they put out top notch large gauge jewelry that had a mirror finish that I've never seen rivaled. Chuck was one of the few jewelers who, by hand, could produce a ring for a P.A. in 1/2" stock with an inner diameter of 1/2" with a threaded 5/8" ball that fit perfectly. Sure, some of their output would make a devoted APP acolyte cringe; the 00ga externally threaded barbells I had made as a present to myself on my 17th birthday would likely cause a panic, but the threads were buffed for easy insertion and years later when I finally gifted them to a friend they had retained a perfect finish.

In my time visiting the shop - with Jack at first and then later to spend time with Mike and Chuck - it was always an adventure. My brother and I would meet up with Brian Skellie, Kevin Covella, and Rob Moore, maybe pack a few orders (when I first started going I was 16) and be in awe that we finally found people who 'got' it. Sometimes we'd continue on to Jack's house and document a modification procedure, meet some of his out of town friends, or just sit in the pool or hot tub and enjoy the company. The shift was taking place quickly from an older gay demographic to younger people who were taking on modification as a culture and not a kink and Jack was grooming us to help bridge the gap. Visits to Silver Anchor had them asking us questions about making 'earlets' since more people were stretching their lobes and despite having made custom half question mark shaped nipple jewelry they had never seen a stretched earlobe before mine.



Emil Gundelach, Big Ed Fenster, and Mev Chapman (seated)

You have to appreciate dealing with Ed whose entire history was with piercing as a sexual thing being able to make some of the most complicated "u-tubes" imaginable, but being completely vexed by the mechanics of a plug for stretched earlobes. U-tubes were urethra tubes, which later went on to be universally referred to as 'Prince's Wands' and Ed specialized in them. I remember sitting at the desk one day packing orders and seeing this MONSTER of a tube in his inbox (back when the inbox was actually a box and not an email account) that he had made for himself. At the thickest it was a full 5/8" with 1" balls and 4ga posts for his apadravya. I remember thinking that it looked more like a billy club than a dick accessory. Ed looked at me sheepishly and said "my girlfriend likes me to wear this when I fuck her."

Ultimately, under Mike's direction Silver Anchor became a powerhouse of a company. At the time it was a seller's market, and with body jewelry being as rare as it was, paying over \$20 wholesale for a 12ga ring wasn't uncommon. When things got too big the stresses started to appear and eventually Mike and his partner moved on to start Bravo! Body Jewelry. Several of the jewelers Ed had hired did the same, and before long over saturation of a niche product flooded a small area. Tattoo shops started selling body jewelry. Tampa, the nearest major



Above: Mike Natali (left) with Shawn Porter (right)
Below: Jewelry from the Silver Anchor
SABJ001 (archival photo number).
Location: Crystal Springs, Florida.
Year: Approximately 1988.

A selection of Silver Anchor Body Jewelry fresh from the buffing station. Items include tapered insertion pins, captive ball rings, barbells, screw on ball rings, stainless steel shackles and guiche weights.



city to Zephyrhills, saw a piercing only shop open under the name of Leather Tiger—that's a story in and of itself—with a 'head piercer' who had to have PFIQ's "Pierce with a Pro" open when he'd do a piercing. Once Jack Yount passed away things mostly fell apart.

In time Silver Anchor closed its doors. I'm not sure what happened to its back stock or employees. I'm not even sure what happened to Ed Fenster. But I still have a handful of my Silver Anchor jewelry in their original bags that I keep for old times' sakes.

Here's a video featuring Ed (with very little clothing, sterile or aseptic technique, or gloves - remember when it was filmed) that I posted on Modblog back in 2008. It'll hopefully give you a glimpse into the [sexual nature of pre-1990s body piercing/modification](#).

Have History, Will Travel

It must have been about 1991 when I first met Mike Natali; two decades later and we've taken to calling our first meeting 'guiche day' as both of us were at Jack Yount's Zephyrhills, Florida house to have ours pierced when we were introduced and became fast friends. Mike became an older brother/uncle figure to my brother and I. Under his leadership, Ed Fenster's Silver Anchor body jewelry company experienced massive growth and his own Bravo! Body Jewelry set a high bar for the companies that followed.

In late August I traveled down to Tampa to reconnect with Mike and to record an oral history with him about his introduction to Jack and Ed Fenster, his time at SA and Bravo and his career as a body piercer. The videos need to be edited and a transcript made, but it was really great to spend the afternoon with him and get his story told.

Editor's note: When I spoke with Shawn in February of 2017, these items still required transcribing.

Calling All Manufacturers, Collectors And Enthusiasts

The Body Piercing Archive, in conjunction with the Association of Professional Piercers, will be hosting a historical body jewelry exhibit on the Expo floor in 2017.

We are looking for jewelry, catalogs, jewelry packaging cards, business cards and any other stand out items from 2007 and earlier. We would like to focus on defunct companies however, all steel, titanium, niobium, glass, and gold companies are encouraged to participate (alternative materials will, hopefully, be another exhibit in the future).

Please note, we do not want your items. We just want to share and display them for our community. All items will have clear attributions and descriptions from the information you will have provided. This exhibition will also appear in the Point Magazine. For more detailed information, please contact Matte Erickson at archive@safepiercing.org

*Thank you,
The Body Piercing Archive
archive@safepiercing.org*



FUNDRAISING FOR THE BPA

GENE GOWEN

Oculo Visitant Gallery

My name is Gene Gowen. I am a proud Member of the Association of Professional Piercers and the Manager for Oculo Visitant Gallery, located in Oneonta, NY. Oculo is a sister studio to Hand Of Glory Tattoo and The End Is Near Body Piercing in Brooklyn, NY.

Like the rest of our membership, my first introduction to the Body Piercing Archive was during the 2015 APP Conference. I spent that week attending classes and the jewelry exposition. However, I continually found myself filling my free time wandering around the Body Piercing Archive (BPA) exhibit. The Sailor Sid collection—as well as the entire BPA display that year—was a great place for us all to gain a very important historical perspective on the work we do. It was also an incredible expression and display showing our industry's gratitude for the work, efforts, and struggles of those who did so much to pave the way for the rest of us.

Every time I visited the BPA exhibit that week, I saw the importance and purpose for an official archive. While sitting in the Member's Meeting, and after talking with Paul King, I began to understand the challenges this fledgling non-profit organization would face, even falling under the umbrella of the APP. Not knowing what, if anything I could do to contribute, I hesitated to volunteer. After a week of pondering the idea I finally mustered up the courage to ask Paul if there was anything I could do to help the efforts for the Archive.



One of two blankets made from vintage industry shirts—photo by Kendra Jane B.

After many conversations back and forth I am proud to announce that I am now responsible for generating fundraising items, to be used on behalf of the Body Piercing Archive.

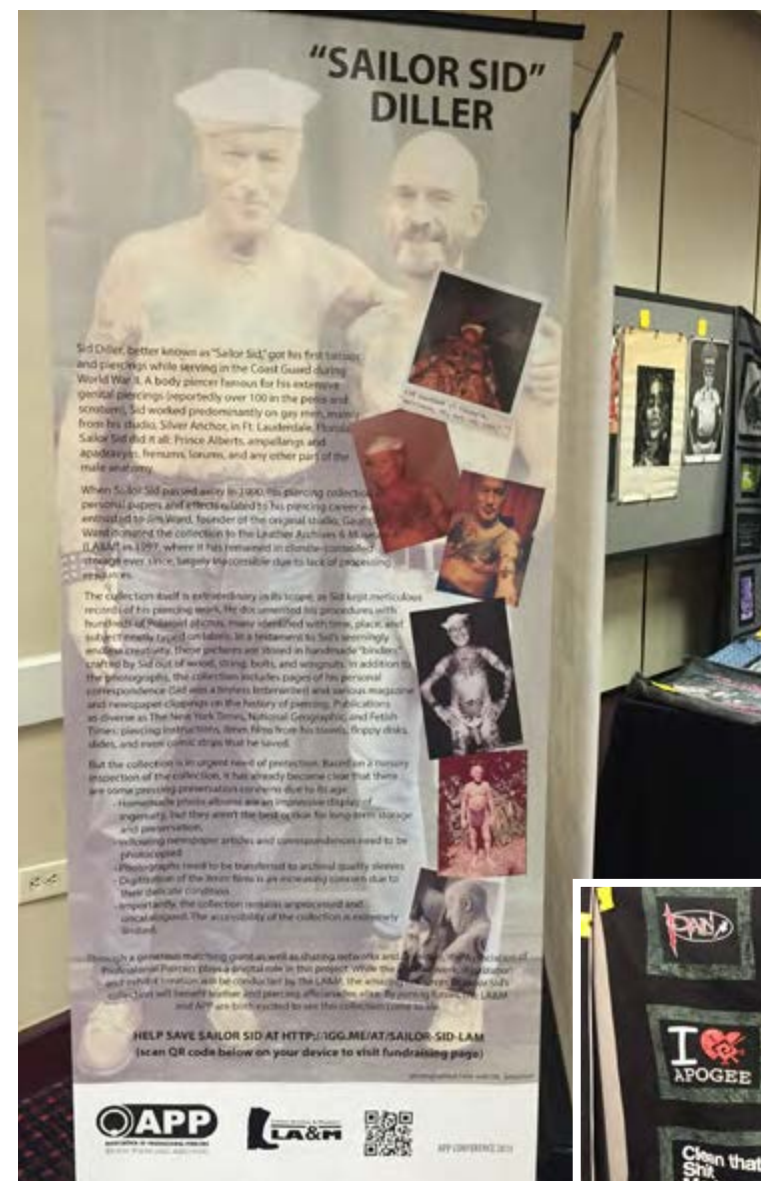
I spent the remainder of 2015 and the first few months of 2016 working on gathering items that we could use in our fundraising. The idea was simply to create something that would be historically relevant to our industry, while still being something that the average Conference attendee would be interested in and be able to afford.

Our first tangible products were a series of memory quilts, bags, and cases. To make these items, we used shirts from piercing studios, jewelry manufacturers, and past Conferences that had been collected or donated. These items were made in a collaborative effort between my mother and myself. This project became a way to contribute to the APP and also a way for my mother and I to work together on something. These were presented at the 21st APP Conference in July of 2016.

As the 2016 Conference drew to a close, I once again approached Paul King. This time to ask if I could continue to generate fundraising donations for the BPA. He was kind enough to not only allow me to continue my work, but also invited me to become a permanent committee member for the Body Piercing Archive.

I am so proud to serve as the current Fundraising Coordinator for the Body Piercing Archives Committee. As we approach the 2017 Conference, I am once again back to work on our fundraising projects. Just as

with last year's donations, I will be using iconic shirts from within our industry as the source material for our fundraising items, but this time I'll be doing things a little differently. No matter what direction the Archive may take in years to come our fundraising efforts, and our end goal remains the same. We will always strive to find projects we feel best way to honor our past. Where we come from has its place in our world today and we will continue to collect, celebrate, and share this collective history.



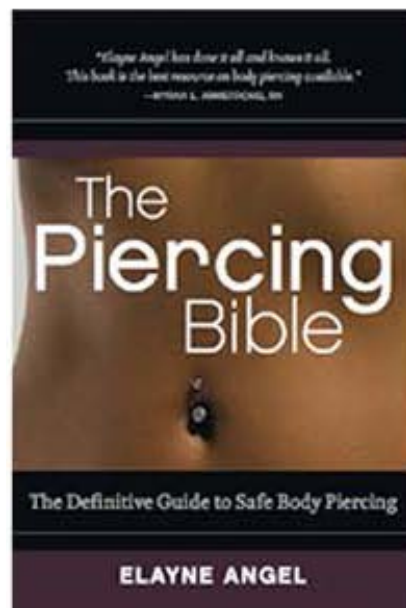
Left: BPA exhibit poster. Below: the second of two blankets made and donated by Gene and his mother. Photos by Kendra Jane B.



PIERCING

ELAYNE ANGEL

Interview by: Sean Dowdell



Sean Dowdell: Can you give us a little background as to how you came to be interested in piercing? Who taught you?

Elayne Angel: Well, how far back do you want me to go? If it's all the way to the beginning, my interest in piercing started when I was about five years old. I had a bracelet of tiny "pearls" on an elastic string. I broke it, took a pair of the little beads, and pressed them onto my earlobes until they stuck, so it looked like I had pierced ears. I did this daily until I lost them all. This was in 1965, which is when I started to ask (and then beg) my parents to let me get my ears pierced. After two years, they finally agreed. My first earlobe piercings were performed by my father, who is an MD. He was practicing family medicine at that time.

He did use a gun, but it was an old-school, autoclavable model made of steel. The steel studs it inserted were cylindrical (a bit like Frankenstein's neck bolts), and were actually quite sharp. In fact, they were both the tool and the jewelry I used when I began to put

additional piercings in my own earlobes in 1972. Those studs also inspired the technique I used a few years later, when I first had "piercing parties" in which I pierced the ears of my friends. I would file a point onto an earring with a nail file, then use the stud to do the piercing. I found this was much easier than making a hole with a needle, then trying to fit an earring into the opening. Obviously, I'm not proud of that method today, but there weren't a lot of options back then. I was in high school by that time, and wore five earrings in one ear and three in the other, which was not at all common.

In the mid-seventies I also did my first piercing on a body part other than an ear: I pierced the pinchable bit of tissue just below the prominent bone of my own left wrist, using a small gold hoop. I was utterly entranced with this little piece of metal passing through my flesh, and it made me crave more piercings. I wore that ring for about two weeks and then took it out because I was afraid my parents would see it. Years later, out of nostalgia, I redid that same spot. Unsurprisingly, it proved challenging to heal.

When I was growing up, I loved to peruse my father's old textbooks and discuss all manner of medical topics with him. I learned a lot from my doctor-dad, but still feel lucky that I never give myself (or anyone else) an infection during those early experimental times.

Fast forward a few years to 1981, when I met a couple at a Renaissance faire that had pierced nipples. I was riveted (pardon the pun) and knew I just had to have nipple piercings myself. Immediately, I rushed home that evening and after applying some ice, I used a small gold hoop to pierce my right nipple. I looked at that crooked little ornament and knew it wasn't right. Fortunately, that pierced couple had told me that there was actually a place you could go to get a professional piercing done! It was called

Gauntlet, located in West Hollywood, CA, and it had opened in the 1970s. The shop was just over the hill from where I grew up in Southern California's San Fernando Valley. Yes, I'm a (former) "Valley Girl."

I went to Gauntlet and got both of my nipples pierced the following day, and was forever hooked. Over the ensuing years, with tremendous enthusiasm, I got additional piercings and brought in countless friends, acquaintances, and near-strangers—anyone I could convince about the delights of body piercing. I scrupulously studied how the piercers (Jim Ward, and his assistant, George) did everything. I also assisted Jim during a number of demonstrations for The Society of Janus, a local BDSM social group. To be honest, for better or worse, that observation is what served as my initial training. Then friends started talking me into doing piercings at home. Please remember, this was modern piercing's Stone Age.

In the early 1980s, I was employed as a Sign Language interpreter at a university, and wore my pierced nipples and other parts safely hidden beneath my prim smock. Then I ended up getting severe tendinitis in my arms from overuse and was completely unable to do my job. So I worked in my father's medical office for a while, then went back to school. I took a course in marketing and management at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM).

Shortly after graduation, I put on my business suit, and armed with my resume, I was interviewed by Jim Ward. He hired me to manage Gauntlet, as he had moved up to San Francisco. After offering me the job, Jim inquired, "By the way, how are your piercing skills?" True story.

Jim must have thought I'd absorbed enough about piercing by sheer proximity or maybe osmosis, because once he hired me, he simply left me to it and returned to San Francisco. I do recall having a phone

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conversation a few weeks later in which I commented, "The piercings are going pretty well, but it sure is hard to get the jewelry in." He came back down to L.A. to show me the proper grasp for a jewelry insertion, and he also taught me how to bend a nostril screw. There really was no formal apprenticeship, so I'm fortunate to have had some medical information and background, and a decent aptitude for the task. What I initially lacked in technique, I think I made up for in passion, reassuring bedside manner, and excellent communication skills. I still maintain that these are among the key traits of any good piercer, along with sound technical skills, and rigorous hygiene protocols.

To clarify, body piercing wasn't a career-path option back then. At the time, there was just the one specialty

piercing business in the country (possibly the world). It was an incredibly esoteric activity; most people had never heard of a piercing other than the ear, or possibly the nostril. Body piercing was simply not on the map. These little stories usually help to provide some perspective:

- Piercing was so misunderstood that my former gynecologist broke patient confidentiality (and the law) to tell my parents that I'd had my nipples pierced—even though I was legally an adult. They thought I might need to be institutionalized for harming myself!
- In the 1980s, when I first pierced got my tongue pierced, I told everybody that it was an acupuncture stud for weight control. Not a single person ever doubted me, since nobody had heard of a tongue piercing. Yet.
- A tattoo artist/Gauntlet client told me that he had to hide his piercings from his boss, as if it were known that he was pierced, he'd be fired from the tattoo shop for being a freak! We (Gauntlet) always tried to rent a booth at the National Tattoo Association conventions, and in my early days there, we wouldn't even receive the courtesy of a reply to our requests! They thought piercing was perverse, and that it would give tattooing a bad name. You see, piercing and tattooing didn't always go together the way they do now.

SD: How did you work around the issues of not having standard jewelry at the time of your learning? Were you involved in creating some of the jewelry standards as well?

EA: Fortunately, by the time I began working at Gauntlet in the '80s, Jim Ward had already developed many of the jewelry styles we commonly place in fresh piercings today. We used a lot of rings back then for almost everything though, including nipples. They were, by far, the most popular piercing at the time.

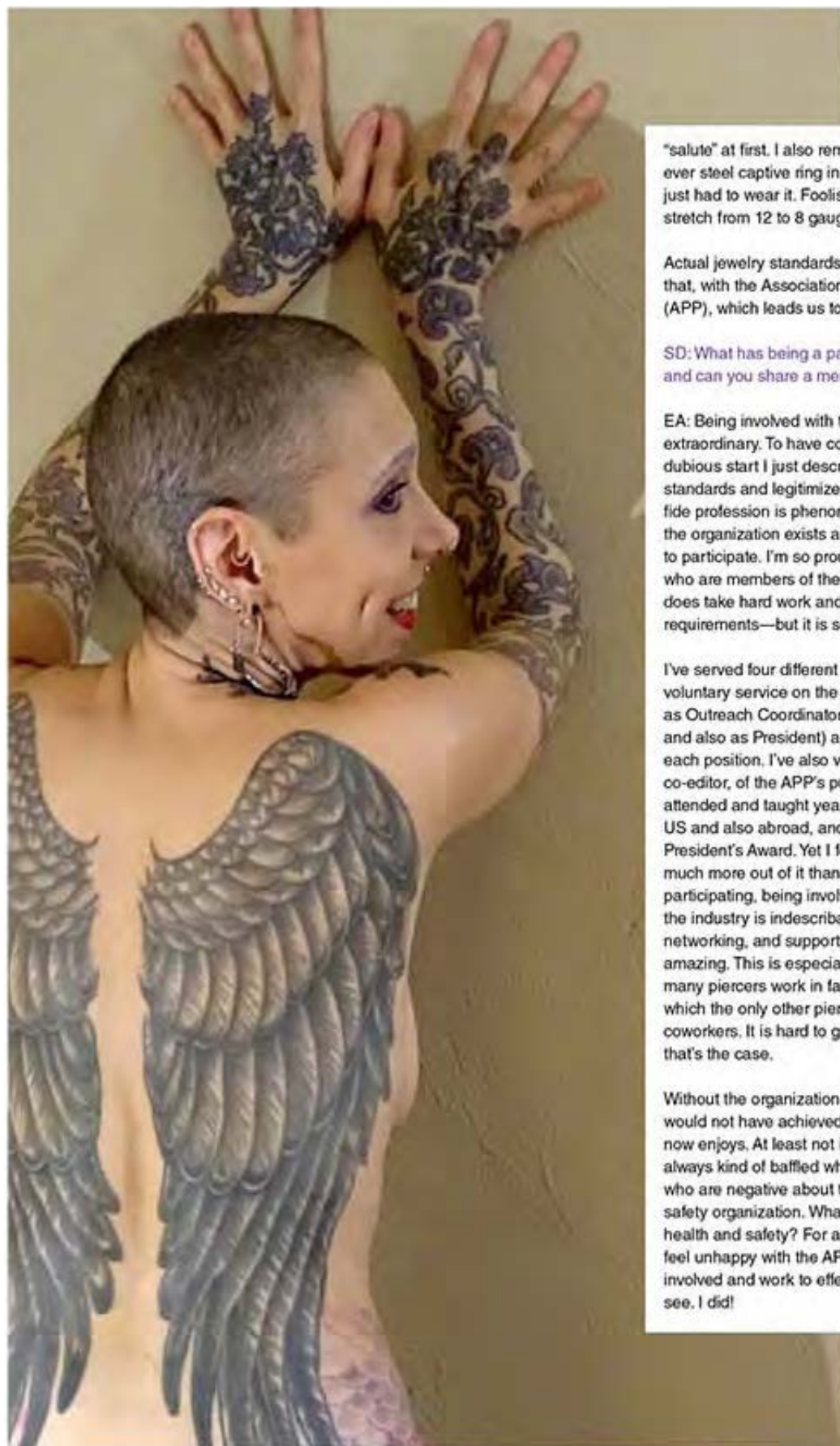
Jim was a huge fan of the fixed bead ring, since his background was in fabricating gold jewelry, and lost balls were pricey. I was the one who championed the versatility of the captive bead ring, and was involved in acquiring a large array of captive options for our studio inventory, and making those more popular than the less-modifiable counterpart. I also came up with the captive circular barbell by adding a bead to the center, which prevents the ends from unscrewing, and makes the open style into a complete ring.

People often assume that we used externally threaded jewelry back then, but this is not accurate. The pieces in 14 gauge and thicker were all internally threaded. We rarely used any externally threaded jewelry, which came in 18 and 16 gauge and was available only in white or yellow gold by custom order. I do recall that curved bars were not among the standard styles, though. My own navel piercing, circa 1985, was performed by part-time Gauntlet employee Bob Flanagan of "Supermasochist" fame, and was done with a straight barbell. I experienced a lot of healing trouble, but we were working our

way toward the current methods. When navel piercings became popular in the '90s (thanks to Aerosmith and their video for the song, "Cryin'") we always put in rings.

Initially, almost all of Gauntlet's jewelry was gold. But during my tenure there, I witnessed the development and growing popularity of steel body jewelry. I remember seeing the first 18 gauge 3/8" steel fixed bead ring. It was a little marvel! We'd only ever stocked little rings in white and yellow gold. I just had to wear it, and came up with the idea of a horizontal eyebrow piercing. It healed surprisingly well with the little ring, though the jewelry did





"salute" at first. I also remember seeing the first ever steel captive ring in 8 gauge 3/8" and again, I just had to wear it. Foolishly, I forced my septum to stretch from 12 to 8 gauge to accommodate it. Ouch.

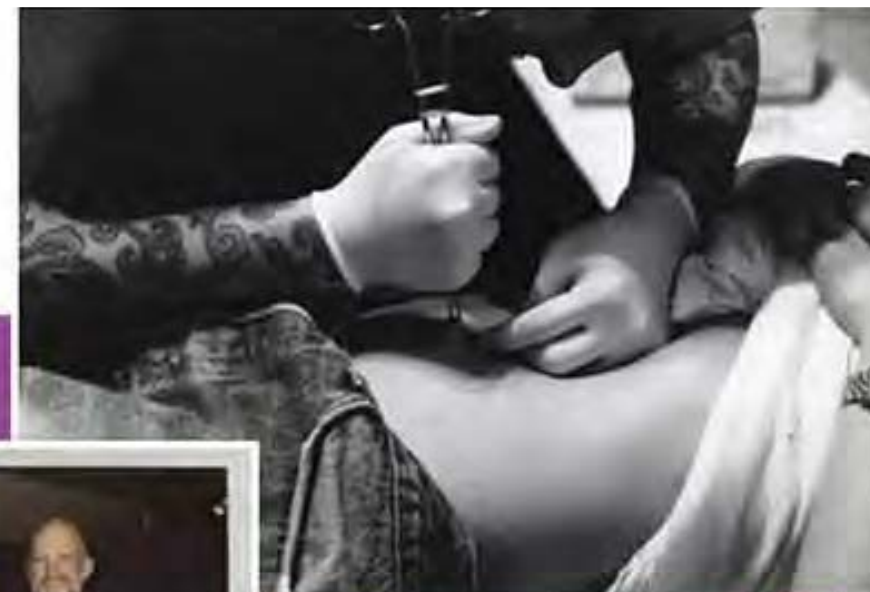
Actual jewelry standards came much later than all that, with the Association of Professional Piercers (APP), which leads us to your next question.

SD: What has being a part of the APP done for you and can you share a memorable moment with us?

EA: Being involved with the APP has been extraordinary. To have come from the somewhat dubious start I just described, to helping set standards and legitimize piercing as a bona fide profession is phenomenal! I'm thrilled that the organization exists and that I've been able to participate. I'm so proud of my colleagues who are members of the association because it does take hard work and dedication to meet the requirements—but it is so worth it.

I've served four different three-year terms of voluntary service on the Board of Directors, (once as Outreach Coordinator, twice as Medical Liaison, and also as President) and learned so much in each position. I've also volunteered as editor, and co-editor, of the APP's publication, *The Point*. I've attended and taught yearly at conferences in the US and also abroad, and I am a recipient of the President's Award. Yet I feel like I've gotten so much more out of it than I put in. The satisfaction of participating, being involved, and helping to shape the industry is indescribable. The camaraderie, networking, and support are nothing short of amazing. This is especially critical since, as I did, many piercers work in fairly solitary situations in which the only other piercers around (if any) are coworkers. It is hard to grow and develop when that's the case.

Without the organization, I know that piercing would not have achieved the level of legitimacy it now enjoys. At least not in the same timeframe. I'm always kind of baffled when I hear about people who are negative about the APP. We're a health and safety organization. What piercer could be "against" health and safety? For any piercers out there who feel unhappy with the APP, my best advice is to get involved and work to effect the change you want to see. I did!



One of my APP highlights has to be teaching in Spanish at the seminars in Mexico a few years after moving to the country. Another was being roasted at a conference banquet. One of the male board members entered the huge, crowded room as a caricature of me. He wore a flamboyant outfit in my signature purple, a bald cap over his hair, my tattoos drawn on him, sparkles stuck to his face where I have my piercings, etc. It was a riot!

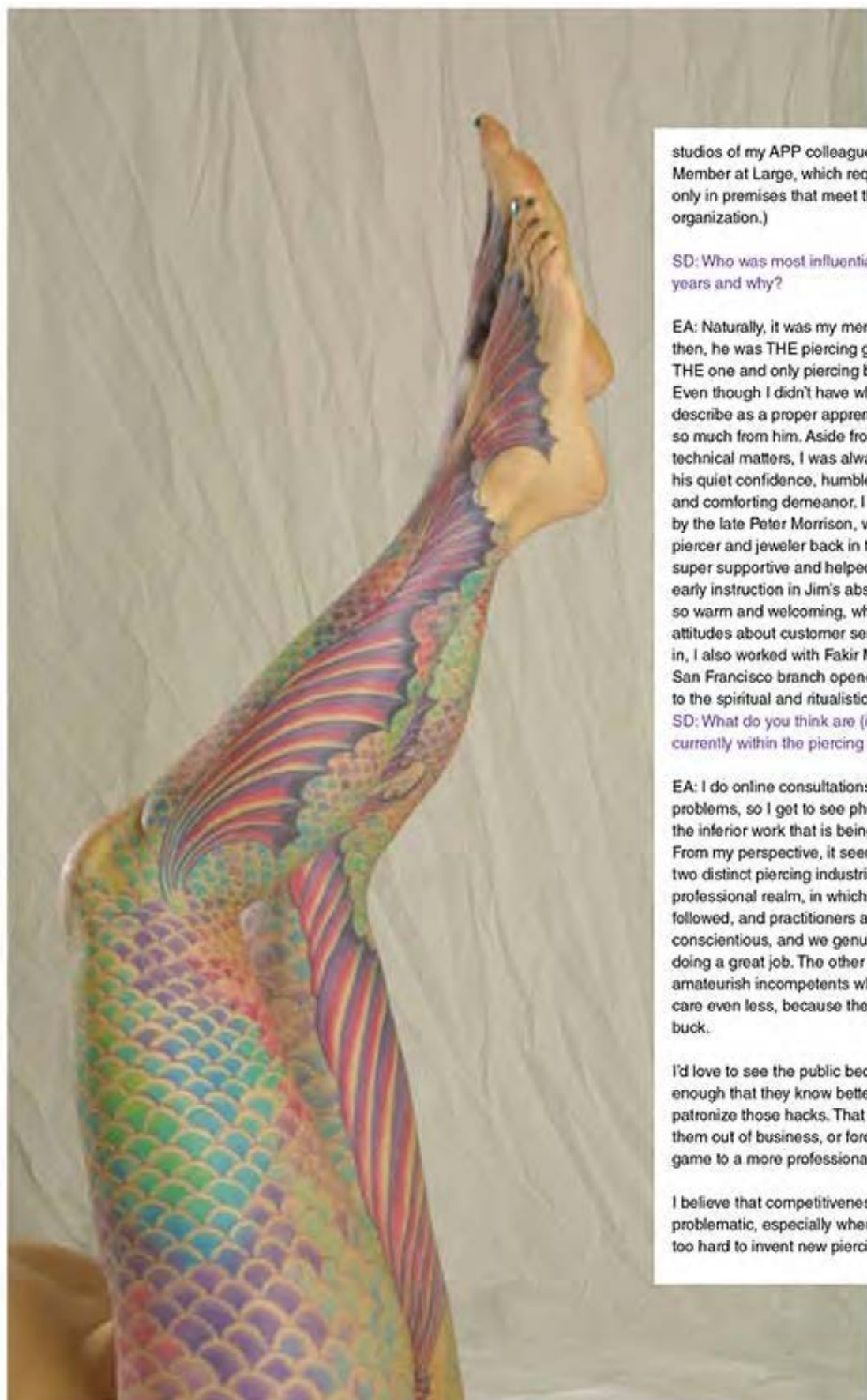
I'll also never forget the flood of emotions I experienced watching Jim Ward play harp for a room full of spellbound piercers at conference. Knowing Jim's origins and his role in piercing history, witnessing that gave me chills. Jim and I have often spoken about how neither one of us could ever have imagined that piercing would become so mainstream and widespread, no less become a profession common enough to warrant a conference! To fully appreciate this, read his book, *Running the Gauntlet—An Intimate History of the Modern Body Piercing Movement*. It is absolutely fascinating, and a must-read for every piercing practitioner, and all history buff piercees.



SD: When did you open your first studio and where?

EA: Following my departure from Gauntlet, I remained on good terms with Jim Ward, and wanted to open my business as far as possible from any of his studios, which were in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York City. The location I picked was the French Quarter of New Orleans, Louisiana, where I opened Rings of Desire, Inc., in 1992. It is the only studio I've ever owned.

We specialized exclusively in piercing (no tattooing, which has been prohibited in the Quarter since the 1980s). After over 12 marvelous years there, I closed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and moved to the Yucatan in Mexico. Interestingly, I had purchased my house just a few weeks before the storm. I can hardly believe I have been living here for 10 years already! Now I do guest piercing around the US at the



studios of my APP colleagues. (I am a Business Member at Large, which requires that I work only in premises that meet the criteria of the organization.)

SD: Who was most influential to you in the early years and why?

EA: Naturally, it was my mentor, Jim Ward. Back then, he was THE piercing guy, and he owned THE one and only piercing business, Gauntlet. Even though I didn't have what we'd now describe as a proper apprenticeship, I learned so much from him. Aside from practical and technical matters, I was always impressed by his quiet confidence, humbleness, and his calm and comforting demeanor. I was also influenced by the late Peter Morrison, who was a Gauntlet piercer and jeweler back in the '80s. He was super supportive and helped with some of my early instruction in Jim's absence. Pete was so warm and welcoming, which impacted my attitudes about customer service. A few years in, I also worked with Fakir Musafar after the San Francisco branch opened. He exposed me to the spiritual and ritualistic aspects of piercing.

SD: What do you think are (if any) problems, currently within the piercing industry?

EA: I do online consultations for piercing problems, so I get to see photos of some of the inferior work that is being done out there. From my perspective, it seems like there are two distinct piercing industries. One is the professional realm, in which standards are followed, and practitioners are skilled and conscientious, and we genuinely care about doing a great job. The other is Hackland, full of amateurish incompetents who know little and care even less, because they're just in it for a buck.

I'd love to see the public become well educated enough that they know better than to ever patronize those hacks. That will eventually put them out of business, or force them to up their game to a more professional level.

I believe that competitiveness is sometimes problematic, especially when practitioners try too hard to invent new piercings. I've seen



his done with a focus on piercers making a name for themselves, rather than more critical considerations like the health and safety of their clients, or the probability of successful healing.

SD: What is something positive that comes from the piercing industry?

EA: We provide a service that allows people to exercise their freedom of expression, and to customize their bodies safely, sanely, and professionally. I've seen this lead to increased self-esteem, improved body image/acceptance, and other positive outcomes like I describe in my next response.

SD: What is your favorite piercing(s) to perform, and why?

EA: I love to do triangle and vertical clitoral hood (VCH) piercings. I receive so much gratification when I get positive feedback from clients who experience the enhanced sensation and greater sexual satisfaction they're seeking! Also, most women are understandably anxious, and so many of them are amazed at how relatively painless the process is, and how quickly I perform their piercings. That's extremely gratifying as well. For the last two years or so I've been specializing exclusively in male and female nipple and genital piercings. A large percentage of my clients are nature women who have no other body art, and they're



looking for functional piercings to spice up their sex lives. Though they often take some extra care and handling, I thoroughly enjoy working with this clientele.

SD: What are your current interests, hobbies, and what are you doing for work these days?

EA: In 2015, I made over a dozen business trips, so for the first half of 2016 I plan to take a hiatus from guest piercing and all that travel. I love living in Mexico, but I've hardly been spending any time here.

So, my next project, which I can do from home, is to provide webinars for piercers. Other than the APP's annual conferences and similar international events, there aren't many continuing education opportunities for professionals in this field. Not all piercers are able to travel, but everyone's got Internet access.

I plan to offer seminars/webinars on male and female genital piercings. I'm also interested in hearing from piercers about what topics they'd like to have me cover. I'm willing to tackle subjects of interest to piercees/prospective piercees, and possibly for medical professionals, too, if there is demand.

Readers are welcome to contact me with suggestions or requests: ElayneAngel@PiercingBible.com. They can also sign up for my free newsletter to be notified when I set new piercing tour cities and dates, and when I have webinars available (at <http://www.piercingbible.com> in the top right corner).



As for hobbies, now that I'm home, I am looking forward to picking back up one or more of the creative pursuits I've enjoyed in the past, such as sewing, beading, and crocheting. I may decide try out some new ones such as ceramics or painting. I love playing ping-pong and have a table here at home. I love taking in the sights in my area, including the ancient Mayan ruins, cenotes, haciendas, and colonial architecture. I'm also an avid reader, and I enjoy movies, music, and dancing.

SD: What would you like other piercers to know that they might not know about you?

EA: Due to my job and appearance (lots of visible body art and no hair) I'm sometimes mistaken for someone who is hip, cool, or some kind of rebel or outlaw. But people who really know me would be far more likely to describe me as...a nerd. I do self-identify as one—but not in a disparaging way. It is simply factual: I'm nerdy and proud of it.

They might also say I'm a bit of a "health nut." My piercings and tattoos are a celebration of my body, and I also honor it through healthful living. That's something I'd really like to see more piercers get into.

I'm focused on all aspects of wellness. I meditate daily, eat a vegan/ gluten-free diet of fresh, healthy foods, workout regularly, stay hydrated, get enough sleep, and avoid substance abuse. I notice that a lot of piercers don't take care of themselves, and that's a shame. At the age of 55, I'm in the best physical condition of my life! I feel fantastic, have super energy, and through my good habits, I'm giving myself the best chance for a long, healthy life that I can fully enjoy.



SD: What advice do you think that most new piercers and studios should be aware of as they start out?

EA: Be aware that our primary concern is not with needles and jewelry—it is with people. In case you have any illusions, piercing isn't an "easy" or get-rich-quick job! To thrive, it takes energy, focus, dedication, competence, and more.

Piercing is an industry in which it is possible to always continue growing and learning. Even today, every single time I pierce, I give my maximum effort to perform the smoothest, gentlest, quickest, most accurate piercing ever. A true professional will pursue knowledge and information throughout their career. I don't know everything there is to know about piercing, and neither does anybody else. I attend conferences to learn as well as to teach. Always keep studying and striving.

Please remember that we work in a personal service industry. Piercing is a service—not a favor. Being a piercer doesn't make you cooler than everyone else. That's a bad attitude I've witnessed repeatedly, and I frequently hear complaints from my clients. They tell me about being insulted and belittled by other piercers. That behavior is bad for your business and it is entirely unnecessary.

12. I know that you write a piercing column for another magazine, why do you feel that it is important?

Yep, I've been writing the "Ask Angel" question-and-answer column for a body art industry trade publication (Pain Magazine) for over ten years. Usually, the questions are sent to me because many piercers don't have anyone else to ask. So my column is a way for piercers to pose questions to an expert and get a timely response (I email them so they don't have to wait for the magazine to come out). If I don't know the answer, I'll find someone who does, and/or research the subject.

Apparently, the piercing field isn't overrun with writers. Since I'm capable of the task, I feel some responsibility to keep written piercing information flowing, and the monthly article is one way to make sure I do that.

Writing the column also allows me to maintain a voice in the industry even though I no longer have my own studio and don't live in the US.

SD: What do you think your greatest contribution to the industry has been and why?

EA: My book, *The Piercing Bible: The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing*, is definitely my greatest contribution. Being published by a respected, mainstream company (now called Penguin Random House) has given greater credibility and validity to the piercing field. I've seen that this is true: we are taken more seriously because such a book exists.

I have no doubt that lots of piercers around the world are doing a superior job, and countless piercees are getting higher-caliber work because of the information it disseminates.

In addition to the material for apprentices and professional piercers, the content of *The Piercing Bible* provides consumers with what they need to know to help them get safer, more successful piercings. And it also supports people who deal with piercees (like medical professionals and teachers).

There simply weren't any comprehensive reference texts on the subject, and there are still no similar books or resources. I'll admit that I didn't really enjoy the writing or publishing process, but I'm glad I did it. I've been taking notes for a revised and updated edition since the day my book came out, but it is up to the publisher as to whether that project will be done.

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