

THE POINT

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The Quarterly Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers



APP CONFERENCE 2007

INSIDE: A GUIDE TO POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS HARDWOODS FOR THE PIERCING COMMUNITY





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FROM THE EDITOR



James Weber
Medical Liaison
Infinite Body Piercing, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

As usual, this, our summer issue follows another successful APP Conference.

Our cover story: *Wood Hazards: A Guide to Potentially Dangerous Hardwoods for the Piercing Community* was exhaustingly researched by Erica Skadsen and Michael Sims, and was part of the wood class taught this year with Todd Farnbach and Ryan Lorenz. Elayne Angel's first part of a three article series on Genital Piercings also comes from her classes taught this year in Las Vegas.

And while this is the issue that is typically filled with a Conference overview, this year, we will be doing something a little bit different. It's been said many times before: there is no way to describe the annual APP Conference in Las Vegas; the only way to experience it is to be there. And while the event has special significance and importance to the attendees—many who return every year—it is especially important and memorable to those who selflessly give their time to help put on the Conference. In addition to the Board of Directors—and our administrator, Caitlin McDiarmid—the running of Conference is accomplished by a dedicated group of volunteers. They do everything from run AV to checking badges at classes to manning the APP booth and selling merchandise to keeping the Board fed and preventing us from strangling each other in a blind fury brought upon by too much caffeine, too little food, and almost no sleep. Conference depends on them all, and it would be impossible to put it on without them.

This year, even more so than most, they are striking in their diversity. They are young—just starting out in this industry and hungry for knowledge. They are experienced—many have been piercing for years. They are well known—several working as APP members in established studios. They are nameless—working for others in small towns under the radar. They came from right next door—California—and they come all the way from Canada and Europe.

And they wrote about their experience of Conference; they wrote not about simply attending, but being given the opportunity to serve. As the rest of us on the Board discovered long ago, that changes everything.

So welcome to issue #40 of *The Point: The Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers*. **P**

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The Quarterly Journal of the
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The APP Board (and administrator) in Las Vegas, 2007. L-R: James Weber, Medical Liaison; Danny Yerna, International Outreach Coordinator; Christina Shull, Secretary; Alicia Cardenas, President; Luis Garcia, International Liaison; Caitlin McDiarmid, Administrator; Eric Anderson, Outreach Coordinator; April Johnson, Vice-President.

POST-CONFERENCE BLUES



Caitlin McDiarmid
APP Administrator

The party's over...

The Post-Conference Blues are real. P.C.B. sufferers spend too much time telling stories about Conference to people who didn't go, only to get blank stares in return. People who weren't there don't understand, and they don't want to see your photos and meet all the people you did—people who are now your friends for life. Those of us with P.C.B. can't figure out how we can be so energized and infused with enthusiasm by the Conference experience—and simultaneously have an overwhelming, let-down feeling in May and June. It's like having the best boy/girlfriend ever—but only for a week out of the year. It is that otherworld/lovely good feeling—which fills you and feeds you—and then is over. Abruptly. With no tomorrows. No “See ya next weekend.” Just done.

The Board and I are suffering from P.C.B.—and perhaps it is hardest on us. No matter what other projects the Board decides to take on during the year, the focal point of many of their efforts is the APP Conference. The planning starts—literally—at the previous Conference. This year at dinner—on Friday night, May 4th—the Board was already brainstorming ideas for classes in 2008 and discussing the things that went really well (and things that failed miserably) in 2007. Board Members have to return to their respective homes and give a little TLC to their businesses, families, and lives after two to three months of intense preparation. They must do this riding the highs and lows of P.C.B. They need to plan and present themselves at the American College Health Association (ACHA) Conference, and this year—for the first time—at the American Dental Hygienists Association (ADHA) Conference, with more time away from studios and home. Not on vacation, but for the APP (and with no compensation).

I have to get out the membership certificates which expire at the

end of May; enter and balance all the financials from Conference; prepare and mail out all the seminar certificates, attendee and vendor thank you's, etc.—along with my regular job duties, all the while fighting off a severe case of P.C.B.—before I can take time off.

We live and breathe Conference preparation for three to four months: Ten, twelve—sometimes twenty hours a day—we work round the clock in Vegas—and then *POOF*...it's over. We get a lot of praise during that week, but we also get a lot of criticism. Unfortunately—when it's all over—what often rings in our head the loudest is all the things that didn't go well: all the complaints and all the things we know we can improve upon. We feel let down—by ourselves. We don't want to think about the APP or next year. We don't want to “dig in and work hard to improve,” we want to disappear and live our lives. Read a book. Sleep in. Go somewhere where there isn't a board meeting waiting for us.

Alicia and I were gonna go to Prom* together. We were so excited about spending time together—outside of the APP or work. Just two friends hanging out. At the last minute, Alicia did the responsible thing and stayed behind. Her business needed her. Her mortgage needed her business. Conference and the APP had consumed any wiggle room. She sent her piercers and tattoo artists for a well deserved break, while she worked. That's Alicia. But I know she has—we all have—a horrible case of P.C.B. How does one recover? Does one? Prom helped, but I think it was because it was like a mini APP Conference—without any of the work. The only real cure for P.C.B. is more Conference. 'Tis true...

So until next year—we will all be a bit bluesy, a bit woozy, a tad in love from afar for the APP.

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AN APPROACH TO GENITAL PIERCINGS



Elayne Angel
Yucatan, Mexico

This is the first in a series of three articles written by Elayne Angel on the topic of genital piercings.

For most of the piercing community, Elayne needs no introduction. After working for Gauntlet throughout the eighties and early nineties, Elayne opened Rings of Desire in New Orleans in 1993, operating it for over a decade. She now resides in Yucatan, Mexico.

She is credited with inventing the Fourchette and Princess Diana piercings, perfecting the Triangle (and performing one for its inventor), and also for coining the term “Lorum.” She is also credited with popularizing the tongue piercing. She claims to have performed over 40,000 piercings over her career in the piercing industry.

And, for some years now, a Google search for the phrase “Genital Piercings” turns up the Rings of Desire website first.

This article—and part two and three, set for publication in the next two issues—is taken from her classes taught at the 2007 APP Conference in Las Vegas.

The information that follows is not focused on piercing techniques; it covers other aspects of genital piercing, which I believe to be equally important. I will describe how you can most effectively communicate with each client, and help to guide him or her to select the piercing that best suits his or her individual needs, desires, and anatomy.

Communication

Think about it: If *you*—the trusted professional piercer—are uncomfortable about genital piercings, how do you expect your client to feel?

My policy has always been to treat genital piercings as absolutely routine—the same as any other body piercing. I don’t charge more to pierce genitals, nor are there any mysterious theatrics involved. This “ordinariness” reflects my attitudes and viewpoints, and helps put my clients at ease. Perhaps because I do so many below-the-waist piercings, this came more easily than if they were a more rare occurrence, as might be the case in your studio. But even if you aren’t on an ampallang-a-day schedule, these principles can still be put to use.

Genitals are just another part of the body. (Well, they *are*.) Simply because our Judeo-Christian Western culture is so uptight about what’s “down there” (as though “it” isn’t even attached to a body) that doesn’t mean piercers have to perpetuate the same affliction in our studios. We have an opportunity to encourage genital pride, and to help clients feel positive and comfortable about celebrating their sexuality and their bodies. Do your best to make the most of it; your

clients will thank you.

Your manner and language are extremely important in conveying this affirmation. The way you speak about genital anatomy and piercings will have a huge impact on your clients’ comfort and confidence levels. The knowledge and expertise you display will also affect whether they perceive you as truly professional. Your ability to speak frankly and in a matter-of-fact manner will not only help to reassure your clients, it will also help him or her to get the piercing that is optimal under the individual circumstances. And those vary *widely*.

To provide the best possible service, the subject of genital piercing necessitates some discussion of sex. Therefore, it is important to become relaxed with proper terminology for anatomy and learn to say the words naturally; clitoral hood, labia, vaginal opening, penis, foreskin, scrotum, urinary meatus, and so on. You must also become conversant with genteel vocabulary for sexual activities. Yes, the words may sound funny at first (especially if you have been relying on slang instead), but the more you use the correct terms, the easier it becomes. (I promise.) Other vernacular may be more common in the “outside world” but that does not make it okay in the studio environment. If you can get the words to roll off your tongue naturally, your clients will be impressed, and you will gain their trust.

I maintain a “clinical yet friendly” approach that allows me to speak in a style that is open and blunt, yet without any hint of vulgarity. If you can learn to do this, you will be able to interact most effectively because conversing explicitly about anatomy and sexuality is vital to determine the best piercing(s) for each client.

You must be able to comfortably discuss whether a woman desires a piercing that provides direct clitoral stimulation or not, and whether a man prefers a piercing that is inserted during intercourse or not (for example). These types of concepts are extremely important to clarify to assure that a client will receive the best piercing. But if you do not bring up the topic, it is rather unlikely that your client will do so. The responsibility is yours; you must use your knowledge and capabilities to appropriately guide your clients. Undertake your role with the reverence and sensitivity that is due. *Your* involvement in selecting and placing genital piercings(s) will ultimately and intimately impact the sex lives of your clients.

Some pointers:

Watch double-entendres and “humor” carefully. Not everybody will share your sense of humor and a “joke” that you think is funny can be perceived as insulting or inappropriate by a client. That could be *very* bad, lawsuit bad. Make certain your humor is beyond reproach.

Your tone and demeanor should be similar to that of a medical professional. You don’t have to be overly formal, but do conduct yourself with decorum. This is not the time to act like you’re “diggin’ a

laid-back rap with your homeys,” it is a situation requiring a measure of maturity, class, and finesse.

Some clients will be comfortable talking about genital piercings at the retail counter, but others will desire more discretion and wish to go into the piercing room for privacy. So evaluate the client for this right from the start, use your judgment, and act accordingly.

Let your client know he or she can contact you after the piercing with any concerns. This exceedingly simple piece of information is a big deal for some piercees. And learning it at the beginning can be the deciding factor for a client to proceed with piercing, and not turn around and walk out, never to return.

pleases their partner. Others have the priority of increasing their own sensation in a particular area or manner. Some want the one that will show the most, others to heal the fastest, yet others want one that is least likely to bleed! And on it goes.

You will need to interview each client to determine the specific motivations and expectations for genital piercings. Inquire about which piercing(s) are of interest—and *why*? Is *stimulation* or *aesthetics* a primary motivation? Is the stimulation important more for the piercee, or does the piercee desire that sensation more for his/her partner? Then there are deeper specifics to probe (pardon the expression) such as whether the goal is increased sensation during

Simply because our Judeo-Christian Western culture is so uptight about what’s “down there” (as though “it” isn’t even attached to a body) **that doesn’t mean piercers have to perpetuate the same affliction in our studios.**

Ministry of Misinformation

One sunny afternoon, a customer resembling a lumberjack swaggered in to my studio and loudly announced with hearty conviction (all but thwacking his penis atop the jewelry counter), “I want an ampallang today.” In the piercing room, I finally convinced him to check the prospective marks for the piercing *after* much discussion about how he trusted me and didn’t need to look. He peeked down and exclaimed, “Oh no, not there!” He actually wanted a frenum piercing.

Significant misinformation about genital piercings is rampant. Do not “assume” that simply because your client comes in requesting a particular piercing by name that he or she knows anything factual about it, or any other genital piercing. My experience shows that clients are commonly possessed of large doses of falsehood and fabrication, and they frequently require substantial education to end up with the piercing they really want—and not the one they *thought* they wanted. Again, an open and explicit exchange is required between client and piercer to clear up misconceptions and provide sound counsel.

Genital General Info— Intensity, Function, and Aesthetics

Many adults are interested in genital piercing but aren’t really sure which of the many options to select. They want to know which is the “best piercing” but there is no “one-piercing-fits-all” answer. It depends on many factors and highly individual desires and preferences (without even bringing individual anatomy in to the discussion yet). For some clients the most important aspect is that the piercing

penetration, or enhanced clitoral stimulation. Also relevant is whether the client is engaging in sexual activities with the opposite sex or not. If he is gay, clitoral stimulation of his partner will *not* be a goal, for example. Are there other factors such as bike or horse riding, or an upcoming honeymoon? All this information is vital for selecting the optimal piercing placement.

Discussing these specifics may seem like “TMI” (Too Much Information), especially if the piercee reminds you of your dad or grandma, but this is your job and it is *important*. Take it seriously—or stick to eyebrows and navels!

Clearly genital piercings vary from one another in many ways beyond their aesthetics. One notable aspect is their *intensity*. That includes relative pain level of receiving the piercing (from “no big deal” to the most serious among piercings), and gravity of the aftermath (duration and level of discomfort, and healing time). Healing periods can be a brief matter of weeks (as with a Prince Albert and Vertical Clit Hood), or extend many months or even a year for some areas such as with an ampallang or apadravya. So, you will need to figure out if intensity and “seriousness” seem of concern to the client, and this can often be determined without even asking. If all of his or her questions center around, “how bad does it hurt” or “how fast does it heal” then suggesting any intense or serious piercings will be unwise—at least for their first. As we know, many piercees start with one and add on from there.

It makes sense that the primary inspiration for a majority of genital piercing candidates is *function* during sexual activity: the potential for adding sensation for the piercee and/or his partner. Certain



L-R Didier Suarez, Luis Garcia, and Eric Anderson discussing surface anchors and single-point piercing at the 2007 Conference

piercings do have more impact on sexual activities than others and a crucial part of your “guidance counselor” job is to be certain your client’s objectives for the piercing are reasonable and attainable. If their hopes and dreams are not realistic, and you don’t “set them straight,” you’re going to end up with clients who are disappointed in *you*. The addition of a PA or frenum is not likely to give his partner multiple orgasms if she has never experienced them before. Educate your clients with sound information to produce realistic expectations. Do not allow your client to anticipate that a piercing will be a panacea for all sexual problems including unskilled, bored, or unfaithful partners.

It doesn’t hurt to make sure any piercee who is planning to “surprise” his or her spouse or partner with a genital piercing has either discussed them before (and their other half is supportive), or issue the admonition that not all partners appreciate genital piercings.

A Picture /s Worth 1000 Words

A photo album/portfolio of piercings is indispensable because it educates clients about what piercings are available, what they are called, and exactly where on the human body they are placed. Pictures can clarify which piercing(s) are of interest to the client, and also provide a basis for contrast and comparison of the client’s own unique anatomy.

Whether due to the diminutiveness of the region and challenge in getting a close look, or a lack of education, many women do not even know the correct names for specific parts of their genitals. They regularly confuse the clitoris and clitoral hood, and inner labia with outer labia. But, of course, YOU will need to know the difference if you are doing genital piercings.

Creeps and Vibes

Also, it is *not* appropriate to charge \$100.00 for male genital piercing and \$10.00 for female genital piercing! Personally, I’ve always charged the same fee for an eyebrow, labia, or apadravya. Nor is it appropriate to do only male *or* female genital piercings. I

believe you should either pierce neither regions or not.

I also feel that there is frequently validity in a clients’ preference for a piercer of one gender over another that may *not* be prurient or ill motivated. For example, I’ve had plenty of gay male clients, and straight female clients who prefer to have a female piercer, so obviously they aren’t seeking to be “touched” by a piercer of their personal sexual preference.

Admittedly, there is a contingent of creepy straight-male clients who *do* want to have their genitals handled by a female piercer (or gay men who request a male piercer, and other sorts of characters with various penchants and proclivities). If the vibe is so vulgar that you really don’t feel comfortable, you do reserve the right to refuse service and just say, “No.” If the atmosphere isn’t prohibitive, proceeding while acting *extremely* clinical and distant usually kills their buzz.

Informed Consent—Before Piercing

There are a few topics that are extremely vital to clearly explain *before* the piercing takes place. Afterwards is simply “too late.” It isn’t that the information isn’t valid or useful later, but I believe it is *unfair* to the client to postpone these discussions until after the piercing has been done.

Always tell a client that the piercing might bleed *before* you pierce. Clear expectations help to reduce anxiety.

Show the client exactly where (on his or her body) the piercing will be placed so there are *no* surprises.

Explain any anatomical irregularities that impact placement of a piercing such as asymmetry, a mole, scar, etc., if you will need to place the piercing in a non-standard position, or if the jewelry will appear angled, crooked, or offset in any way.

Make certain client understands the necessity for gentler, safer sex, using barrier protection throughout the *entire* initial healing time! (Yes, this is required even if he or she has a monogamous partner.)

Other articles coming soon on hints, tips, and techniques: Female Genital Piercings and Male Genital Piercings. P



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PROUD MEMBERS



WHAT DO I GET FROM APP MEMBERSHIP?



Christina Shull
APP Secretary
High Priestess Piercing
Eugene, Oregon

Many non-members, both at Conference and online, have asked this question. I find most piercers who ask me this support the mission and the standards of the APP wholeheartedly, whether they meet, exceed, or are working to meet the standards in the future. The problem with acquiring new members is rarely an issue of piercers supporting the organization itself and its accomplishments, but is instead an issue of “What does the APP do for me?”

Sadly, some piercers say they see APP membership as a “stamp of approval” that they don’t need. They see membership as something that requires time, money and effort without receiving enough benefits in return. While members do receive a limited amount of physical “perks” to membership, most piercers are overlooking the many direct and indirect benefits of membership.

That being said, “What does the APP do for you?”

First, there is the most obvious physical benefit of membership—member certificates. Your certificate on the wall of your studio is one of the most effective ways to stand out from your competition. Voluntary willingness to comply with industry-set standards is greatly appreciated by clients when you take a few minutes to educate them. An influx of piercing and tattooing in the media has led to more clients researching piercers and piercing procedures. These concerned clients are now looking to be pierced by piercing professionals who meet and/or exceed industry standards.

It is one thing to explain to a potential client each reason why they should choose your studio; it is another to show them proof. You can talk about your autoclave, training, sterilization methods, techniques, etc., without knowing what they have heard, or will hear, at other studios. Your credentials and supporting evidence are more effective than your word vs. your competitor’s. This is especially important in areas where there are minimal or no regulations regarding piercing.

While educating my clients about safe piercings, I frequently state, “In addition to meeting Oregon State body piercing regulations, all of our piercers are also members of the Association of Professional Piercers. The APP is an international piercing organization that has established industry standards that each of our piercers have to meet to obtain membership. All of our piercers have taken APP required courses, and have proven their knowledge of, and compliance with, appropriate industry standards.” After taking a few minutes to explain the APP and my involvement as a member, the client now has something more to compare: both studios and their piercers are state licensed and inspected, but this studio has also voluntarily met an additional set of standards.

Many of these newly educated clients go on to request and receive referrals to APP members in areas they are moving to or visiting. Referrals are the most important, yet most overlooked, benefit to membership. Anyone familiar with marketing their business understands the importance and effectiveness of word-of-mouth advertising. This is especially true when the reference comes from the client’s trusted piercing professional (or an internationally recognized piercing organization). From a client’s viewpoint, what could be a better referral than one from a professional piercing organization that focuses on their health and safety?

In addition to piercer references for potential clients, the APP also fields referral requests made by medical professionals, health inspectors, government officials, healthcare organizations, media outlets, and others. These happen every day. Sadly, the APP member is often unaware of the referral that led to the gain of a first-time client, the start of a new professional relationship, or a valuable opportunity. Some opportunities that have developed from the APP include members becoming involved with

Sadly, some piercers say they see APP membership as a “stamp of approval” that they don’t need.

legislative or regulatory committees, community outreach and educational opportunities—such as speaking at medical facilities and schools.

The APP website, www.safepiercing.org, is a great source for information and generates the huge amount of referrals. The staggering number of hits the website receives, combined with general email inquiries, generates many client and professional contacts. These come from answered emails, as well as from the member locator on the website.

Clients seeking a professional piercer in their area can use the website to search for APP members by state, or even country. Potential clients, professionals, and other piercers frequently use it. When referring a client to a studio in their area, the member locator is a simple and convenient way to ensure that he or she



With a lot of new attendees this year, many classes at Conference ended up being standing-room only.

finds a studio that is clean, and a piercer that is knowledgeable and uses the highest quality jewelry. Knowing that other APP members utilize high-quality, internally threaded jewelry allows your client to purchase jewelry that is compatible with yours. Other members also have similar aftercare, minimizing confusion for the client and allowing them to purchase additional aftercare products if needed.

Another quickly growing networking and reference tool is the APP Myspace page. This page was established as another avenue for the dissemination of health and safety information to the general public and the piercing industry. With the undeniably rapid popularity of Myspace, the APP has been able to reach out, especially to teens and young adults, in a way that past advertising campaigns could not. A listing has been created on the main page with links to consenting APP member's personal and studio pages to allow for quick referencing. While the Myspace page was started less than one year ago as an experiment, the page has received over 18,000 views. It recently proved its worth when we posted a bulletin seeking information about a problematic newspaper article—and saw over two dozen reposts within less than 24 hours.

The third largest source of referrals to APP members is the APP toll-free line—1-888-888-1APP—that goes to Caitlin in the APP office. On it, we receive many calls from people seeking a professional piercer in their area. This number is found on all APP publications.

With the importance of networking in mind, the Board organized a business card exchange during the member meeting at our annual conference this year. This allowed members to start a collection of business cards for reputable piercers across the country and helps to ensure that traveling/relocating clients will continue receiving quality work and jewelry in a clean and safe environment. Referrals between professionals are not only helpful to the client, but they promote client education and help the professional industry as a whole.

And even if they do not agree with the APP standards and membership criteria, most professional piercers will admit to supporting the overall direction of the organization. So far, I have not met a professional piercer that can argue against the focus of the APP to disseminate educational information to the piercing industry and the general public.

Just a small handful of things the APP does, and has accomplished over the last 13 years:

- Organizing and hosting a yearly conference that provides education to piercers of all backgrounds and experience, regardless of membership status. It is regularly attended by over one thousand people, and is growing larger every year.
- Organizing conferences and educational seminars in other countries—including Amsterdam and Mexico—and providing information and sharing experiences with professionals around the world.

MySpace recently proved its worth when we posted a bulletin seeking information about a problematic newspaper article—and saw over two dozen reposts within less than 24 hours.

- Distributing informational brochures at important events and locations. Free brochures are shipped upon request to high schools and colleges, medical facilities, health departments, legislators, and educational seminars and conferences (to name just a few.)
- Representing the piercing community at professional events. Members of the APP Board of Directors and various members have represented the APP at events including the American College Health Association conference, the American Public Health Association conference, and this year—for the first time—the APP will have a booth at the American Dental Hygienists Association annual conference.
- Encouraging health inspector attendance and education at Conference by offering a free Conference package. We provide accurate and piercing-specific training and education to health inspectors every year to help ensure proper inspections and assist in appropriate updates of current regulations.
- Assisting with legislative efforts. The APP has been directly and indirectly involved with legislative efforts in many cities, counties, states—and even countries. (The APP was initially created in response to California legislation in 1994.) A statement from an international, educational, non-profit organization comprised of working piercers from all over the world will often hold sway with legislators. The APP has been asked to contribute to legislation in many areas. In the last few years, APP representatives have worked to help prevent the banning of genital and/or oral piercings in several different parts of the country.

Now that you are nodding your head in agreement with our efforts and what the organization stands for, consider this: your APP membership gives you the ability to influence the direction of the APP and ultimately, the piercing industry as a whole.

As an APP member, it is your right—and your privilege—to vote for the Board of Directors. Member's input is crucial to the forward momentum of the organization. The people who are voted in as the new Board of Directors will guide the organization for the three years of their term. As a professional concerned about the industry, it is your duty to research the nominees and vote for the people

you feel will represent you as a professional piercer, and take the piercing industry in a positive, and proactive, direction.

Even more importantly, if you are a member who feels strongly about shaping the future of the piercing industry, you are encouraged run for a position on the Board. The APP needs members who genuinely love this industry and want to use their passion, experience, and ideas to shape the future of the APP and the community. Many members consider running for a position, yet are scared that they do not have “what it takes.” What you must have is time and dedication to the duties you take on, good communication skills, and ideas to contribute to the continuing success of the APP.

There are other ways to be involved with the APP if you want to contribute, but cannot dedicate the time necessary for the Board. Several committees are currently forming that need members, including: medical committee, new member outreach committee, conference committee, and legislation committee, and Point committee. Participation in these will provide an opportunity to help the organization—and industry. They will also provide a means for members to offer their ideas and input.

Ideas and suggestions are also always welcome at the members meeting, taking place at the annual conference in Las Vegas. During this time, the board updates the membership on the status of their duties and projects in the last year—and it is also the opportunity for an open dialogue between the board of directors and the membership.

Everything listed here is only possible because of the support of our current and past members. Membership dues are part of the income that funds APP efforts and projects. They provide the APP money to reach out to piercers, the public, and to healthcare professionals and the medical community. The APP is the only piercing organization ran by piercers for piercers. For this reason—and many other—the APP is considered the authority in the industry.

The most important benefit of membership is being a part of a professional community that is focused on improving the standards in our industry and educating the public about the importance of seeking these higher standards. Who in the professional community is opposed to these goals? Any professional piercer already works to educate their clients and their local community. Membership is your way of supporting education on a much larger level and connecting with other piercers who are dedicated to the piercing industry. **P**

EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS: THE APP IN MEXICO



Danny Yerna
International Outreach Coordinator
Wakantanka
Mexico City

As many of you know, last February we held the first APP Mexican Seminars in Mexico City. (See issue #35 of *The Point*.) The response was incredible, and the event was packed with piercers from all over Mexico—piercers, with a lot of energy, piercers that wanted to learn, piercers that wanted to share information, piercers that didn't think they knew it all...

As everything was such a success, we are organizing the second APP Educational Seminars in Mexico.

Last year, the Hotel Plaza Florencia offered their classrooms for this event, and they had no problems whatsoever with all these pierced and tattooed personalities mingling with the bankers that had a conference on another floor of the building. The hotel has a great location in the Zona Rosa, in the heart of Mexico City. A few steps from its door and you are walking on Reforma, one of the main streets of the city with the Angel de la Independencia, Bosque the Chapultepec, Castillo de Chapultepec, Museo de Antropologia and the Zoo. The pyramids of Teotihuacan are an hour ride from the hotel, as well as Frida Kahlo's house and Xochimilco's floating gardens.

The seminars are open to all those with interest in safe and healthy body piercing. We are sure that this year's seminars will be a great opportunity for all piercers—experienced ones and newcomers in the field—get some updates and stay a few steps ahead. Because of the size of the rooms, this year the number of attendees will be limited to 200 persons. Last year we had 100 attendees—and we ended up turning away piercers because of lack of space—so we feel we can count on at least 200 attendees this year.

This year we will have 14 classes and 6 round tables, as well as an extra day for those that want to take the First Aid and CPR classes. We will also be dividing one day's group in two, so some of the more experienced piercers can take different classes as the less experienced ones. This year we have prepared: Aseptic Techniques, Biohazard Waste, Client Service, Initial Piercing Jewelry, Legislation in Mexico, Health Risks, Ear Projects, Studio Set Up, Facial Anatomy, Anatomy of the Body, Surface Piercings, Genital Piercings, Release Forms, Anthropology. And the round-tables planned will be: Clamps vs. Freehand Piercing, Stretching, Piercings on Minors, Basic Aftercare, Scars and Discrimination in our Industry. All the classes are all in Spanish, and we have the valuable help of two doctors, people from Human Rights, and several anthropologists.

In Mexico there are still no laws on piercing. Many of us have been working on this, but until now only two regulations that apply to us are: we can't pierce minors (18 years in Mexico) and we

need a specialized company that recollect our biohazardous waste. Without laws forcing them to be there, all the attendees to the seminars are there because they want to be there; they want to learn and get involved, they want to learn what is going on in the rest of the world. So if you are interested in attending, and are willing to share some information, make new friends and see some amazing cities, come over, practice your Spanish and have a good time.

...and they had no problems whatsoever with all these pierced and tattooed personalities mingling with the bankers that had a conference on another floor.

Editors note: There are two additional important points to make about the upcoming Mexican APP Seminars. Firstly, all classes—indeed the entire 3-day seminar—will be conducted entirely in Spanish. While the enthusiasm for the event by U.S. piercers is understandable, it is organized for Mexican and South American piercers. Since space is limited, preference will be given to Spanish speaking, non-U.S. piercers first.

Secondly, after 2006's Mexican seminars, there was criticism from some about using APP funds to subsidize a Mexican "Conference" when those funds should be earmarked for U.S. education and outreach. As an International Association, it would be short-sighted, isolationist, and contribute to the unfortunate ongoing U.S. attitude concerning foreign policy if the APP did not continue to do outreach outside of U.S. borders. Critics may be assured that last year's event actually made a profit: not a large amount, but enough to use as seed money for this year's event. Additionally, all monies for Mexico based educational seminars are being kept separate from the regular APP operating expenses, and will be earmarked for Mexico-based outreach projects. Finally, it is the hope of the entire Board that these seminars, much like the Amsterdam Conferences, will serve as a starting point for the Mexican and South American Piercers who attend to establish their own health and safety organizations. **P**

WHAT: The Educational Seminars, The A.P.P. in Mexico
WHEN: September 24th through 27th
WHERE: Hotel Plaza Florencia (Hotel and Conferences)
+(52 55) 5242 4700
MORE INFO: info@wakanatanka.com



David Vidra educating health inspectors at this year's Conference

GLOVE TESTING



David Vidra
Health Educators, Inc.
www.hlthedu.com

During any tattoo or piercing it is not enough just to put on gloves. To do so without a clear understanding of the type of glove being used, and why, gives the technician a false sense of security that the gloves will protect them no matter what.

We have to know how and why we use the type of gloves we do and that they are appropriate for the products and chemicals we commonly use. There is an interpretation that the use of petrol base products in conjunction with tattooing is inappropriate due to the breakdown it causes with the latex glove integrity.

There are several tests that all gloves must pass to be accepted as “examination” gloves. We need to understand the how’s and why’s behind the testing so we can choose the right glove for the job, recognizing why we are using that specific type and the criteria behind the selection.

First let’s look at what the ASTM (American Standards Testing Material) standards are for gloves and the relevance to our industry.

Relevant Test Methods

Some of the more relevant test methods include, but are not limited to:

Water leak (ASTM D5151): This test is performed by placing an unused glove over the end of a vertical cylinder and filling it with 1,000 milliliters of water. After a two-minute period, the glove is

observed for leaks. Values are stated as Acceptable Quality Levels (AQL), which is roughly the percent failure rate allowed.

Relevance: Holes, rips and/or very weak areas that rupture in the leak test indicate that barrier protection is compromised.

Thickness (ASTM D3767): The thickness of a single layer of glove is measured in millimeters utilizing a micrometer at specified locations on the upper finger, palm and cuff.

Relevance: Thickness is an important component of barrier protection consistency for both durability and chemical permeation.

Strength or Tensile Strength (ASTM D412): Strength is measured in megaPascals (MPa) to assess the amount of force applied to a glove until it breaks. The calculation is adjusted to normalize for thickness.

Relevance: The lower the tensile strength, the more easily materials of the same thickness can break when snagged or pressure is applied. For example, fingernails exert a tremendous amount of concentrated pressure at glove fingertips.

Ultimate Elongation (ASTM D412): The ability to stretch is determined by extending a strip of glove until it breaks. The percentage the strip is stretched until the break is the ultimate elongation.

Relevance: This stretch ability is very important at the microscopic level where the glove material must be able to give rather than break when stressed or snagged by instruments, fingernails, ridges on caps, twisting stop cocks on IV sets, snapping off enclosures or any tasks performed with gloved hands.

Modulus, resistance to movement or stress at 50% elongation (ASTM D412): This is determined by the amount of force (effort) required to stretch the glove. The lower the modulus, the less effort is required for movement.

Relevance: This measurement enables one to predict the effort wearers will have to exert to perform tasks. This has an indirect impact on barrier performance as hand fatigue may lead to accidents (e.g., puncture, tearing and/or ripping glove material) during procedures. Since the physical properties of synthetic materials differ from each other and from natural rubber latex, one standard cannot be applied to all gloves. Manufacturers vary in the rigorousness of their internal requirements. For instance, some manufacturers have standards that are more stringent than those of ASTM requirements.

Viral Penetration

The viral penetration test is not required but is performed by some manufacturers. ASTM F1671-97b is a standardized test method used to assess the ability of protective clothing to resist viral penetration. A single layer of glove is placed between two halves of a test chamber. A liquid suspension of the challenge virus, Phi X 174, is placed in one side of the chamber. The other half of the chamber is filled with receiving media. Samples are pulled from the receiving chamber at various times throughout the challenge period. Detection of any virus in the receiving media indicates breakthrough and thus failure of the glove material.

Chemical Barrier

Antiseptic, Disinfectant and Liquid Sterilant Penetration Testing:

Gloved hands may routinely come in contact with numerous antiseptics, disinfectants, and/or liquid sterilants. Thus, it is important to know the quality of chemical protection the glove provides.

Although no requirements exist for gloves, some manufacturers may choose to use the ASTM F739 method to evaluate the resistance of their gloves to specific chemicals. Information regarding chemical permeation must be requested directly from the manufacturer. Facilities will vary, but frequently used chemicals include glutaraldehyde, isopropyl alcohol, and formalin.

Characteristics of Glove Degradation

There are general characteristics of glove degradation that may indicate a breakdown in the glove barrier integrity. It is important to recognize these general indicators to help ensure the selection and maintenance of optimal glove protection. These indicators of degradation include:

- Hardening or embrittlement,

- Loss of strength,
- Softening (may see extending of fingertips),
- Loss of tear resistance, • Tackiness,
- Loss of elasticity,
- Cracking

Everyday Practices That May Affect Glove Barrier

The barrier protection of any glove may be further compromised by everyday practices that include storage conditions, skin care, personal habits, and the inability to rapidly identify type of base material. Several of these practices are identified as follows:

Glove Specific

Selection of Powder-Free versus Powdered Gloves. Powder can defeat the intent of glove barrier protection by functioning as a vehicle for the transport of infectious microorganisms and interfering with the local resistance to infection in wounds where powder is deposited. Glove powder may cause dermatitis on hands if cracks in the skin and open lesions are present. This break of the natural skin barrier may also enhance microbial access into the body. Powder can also absorb and aerosolize disinfectants or other chemicals with which the powdered glove comes in contact by passing the intent of the glove.

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Rapid Identification of Base Material (e.g., label, glove ID, color.). When a glove is retrieved, is it apparent which type of material you are donning? Is the base glove material labeled generically as “synthetic” or does it specify vinyl, nitrile, or other synthetic material? It does little good to understand the differences in barrier capability among glove materials if the material of the glove is not readily apparent. Is the color of gloves such that vinyl gloves, for instance, can be differentiated from natural rubber latex gloves? Mistaken identity can lead to the use of a latex colored vinyl glove when the barrier protection quality of a natural rubber latex (NRL) glove was the intended selection. Or, more importantly, a natural rubber latex allergic individual may mistakenly retrieve NRL gloves, which might result in an adverse reaction. The same is true if a NRL glove is used on a natural rubber latex allergic client.

Selection of Glove Size. There should be a full range of glove sizes to accommodate all personnel. Glove length, width, finger contour and thumb position are among the factors to consider when evaluating appropriate glove fit. Gloves should conform to the hands, yet allow ease of movement (low modulus) to minimize fatigue. Poor fitting gloves can interfere with the optional performances of procedures. “Baggy” gloves can cause wearers to execute procedures awkwardly. If infectious agents or hazardous chemicals are used, accidental spills can put staff at personal risk.

Check for the Sticking of Adhesives to the Glove. If the glove is to be used for tasks that require tape or adhesive label contact, check to see if the adhesive material adheres to the glove. Consider an alternate glove if adherence occurs, as forced removal may cause microscopic tears in the material.

Observe for Clumps and Debris. A “halo effect” may be seen around debris imbedded in the glove material. The halo may indicate a weakened area that can fracture during use. This effect can occasionally be seen at glove fingertips where a drop of the liquid glove material can solidify during production.

Donning Techniques. Poor donning techniques can result in glove rips and tears. Personnel should take care to put on gloves correctly and avoid excessive stretching. Thoroughly dry hands before sliding them into gloves.

As we look at these standards we can learn a lot about what gloves we should use and what to look for and hold manufacturers accountable to provide us with the information we need. They should supply a chemical resistant chart on request. This allows us to check the chemicals in the product(s) being used and select the appropriate glove for the task. If you have questions on the information in this article you can reach me via email www.hlthedu.com. Be safe and stay healthy.

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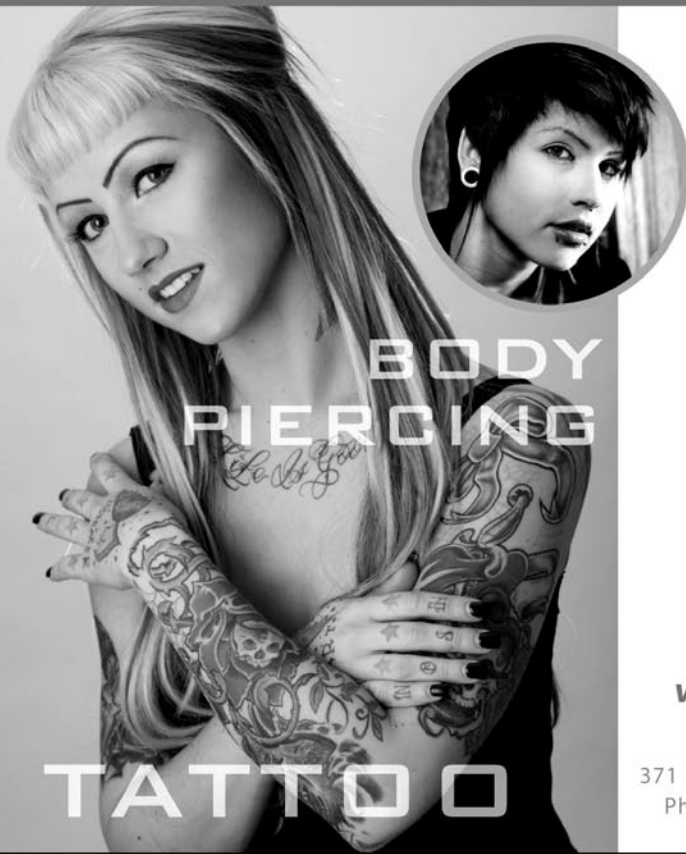
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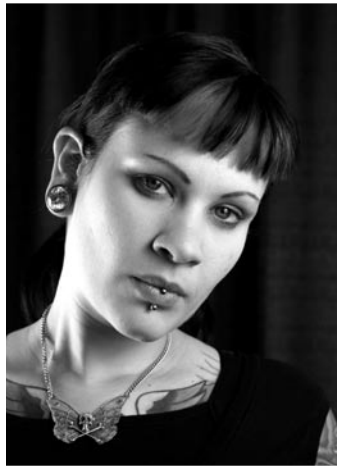
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LAS VEGAS
CONFERENCE
2007





Caitlin's Army: AI D. Scholars (minus Airlick) at the 2007 APP Conference

DARE TO SERVE



Caitlin McDiarmid
APP Administrator

*I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy.*
—**Rabindranath Tagore**

It takes a special kind of person to volunteer at the APP Conference. At the same time, anyone can do it. Volunteering at an event like this is difficult—you are often faced with standing firm and enforcing rules (something many of us are not comfortable with). You have to face your peers and be confident in the information you provide. You must sacrifice your time that could be spent doing a dozen other things; things often perceived to be more pleasant – like drinking at the Splash Bar, taking a class, or sleeping. You have to juggle many tasks often being told what to do by many people. For some, you will volunteer many many hours both before and after “the party” has started.

I mentioned the act of service at the Banquet Dinner—and how I have seen it transform people’s lives. I know that it has transformed mine. I hope that you will read and listen to the words as they are written by some of our volunteers. I hope that given the chance you will thank them for serving our Association, and our event. Consider volunteering for us next year—consider volunteering in your community—consider service as a way of life—I dare you.

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not. —**Dr. Seuss**

A (hopefully) complete list of those who cared enough to serve:
Sonya Adams • Azaliah Anderson • Eric “Sque3z” Anderson • Elayne Angel • Kelly Apshaga-Meaux • Erin Bailey • Richard Banks • Gena Batchellor • Paul Birnbaum • Georg Birns • Barry Blanchard • Adam Block • Jesika Bornsen • Alicia Cardenas • Ed Chavarria • Zach Dear • Alejandra DeOlivera • Gus Diamond • Fakir • Allen Falkner • Todd Farnbach • Luis Garcia • Glen • Gabriel Gonzalez-Rodriguez • Dr. Jaime Hall • Sean Hartgrove • Vanessa Heil • Warren Hiller • Dirk Huckler • Chris Jennings • April Johnson • John Johnson • Kelsey • Dave Kelso • Paul King • Amanda Krahn • Chris Krahn • Ryan Kremp • Kris LaChance • Corey Lolley • Ryan Lorenz • JD Lorenz • Derek Lowe • James Maldonado • Nick Martin • George McAvin • Tiana McGuire • John “Toast” McLean • Airick Olsen • Anne Ott • Ben Overton • Jason Pfohl • James Raimar • Maggie Rees • Betsy Reynolds • Rocky Rodriguez • Jean-Pierre Rogers • Karl Schiemann • James Sens • Chrissy Shull • Crystal Sims • Michael Sims • Brian Skellie • Angela Smith • Randy Smyre • Didier Suarez • Bethra Szumski • David Vidra • James Weber • & Danny Yerna **P**

VOLUNTEERS: ON CONFERENCE



Angi C. Smith
Twilight Studios
Martinez, GA



Kelly Apshaga-Meaux
Lure Tattoo and Piercing
Vienna, West Virginia

It's been almost a month since I returned home from Las Vegas and the APP Conference, and I have to say, that week was one of the best I have ever had.

Normally I'm not a "people person" (I really don't tend to like people in general). So getting on the plane to go to Vegas was completely nerve-racking for me. I made it through the flight alive (surprisingly) and got to the hotel... and it was the most awesome sight I'd ever seen. I walked in and there were mohawks, 2 inch lobes, tattoos, implants, and metal sticking out from skin everywhere I looked—it was incredible. At that moment I said to myself, "This might not be so bad after all." I checked into my room and went to find the action. I really just felt welcome, which really doesn't happen much at home.

The next day started the pandemonium of volunteer work that wasn't work at all. The volunteers I met that day became friends of mine instantly. We worked hard together, we partied together, we learned together and taught each other so much over the course of one week—it was amazing.

The classes and instructors were excellent. Questions were always answered, and never frowned upon. I come from a rinky-dink little town where the piercers don't even talk to one another, so being literally surrounded by people who wanted nothing more than to explain things was tremendous. I learned so much about the craft that it is still sinking in.

The coolest thing that I learned at conference was about the people in our industry. We come from every walk of life: I met kids just starting to find themselves, and people who have been in the industry for decades—all under the same roof, rooting for the same team, pushing for the same goals. Piercing to these people is a way of life, a right of expression. Many have degrees (art, english, accounting) and they choose piercing as their profession. It just shows: we are highly intelligent and very caring people. Most of the people I met at conference are the epitome of what people *should* be. It was an awe-inspiring journey for me, and I cannot wait until next year. **P**



When I received the call saying I'd received an AI D. Scholarship for this year's APP conference, I was elated. Seriously, I never "win" anything.

Once the excitement wore off I began to feel a bit trepidatious. We were warned to be prepared to work hard and handle a lot of stress. We would be exhausted. We would be hungry and some would cry. It was going to be a grueling, awful, week. Truthfully, I wasn't too concerned about this—I enjoy trying to tame chaos. My biggest worry: that I am not inherently a social person. I'm not shy, but am quite content watching those around me without participating.

I wasn't really sure *what* to expect since this is the first year I've attended Conference. My only previous experience with members of this industry was online. I've heard many labels thrown around about people in our industry, specifically APP members, being: divas, prima donnas, or elitists. I'm a small town girl, and don't deal well with uppity attitudes. I was worried but happily it turned out I had no reason to be.

I found all of these stereotypes to be completely untrue. I've never felt so welcome and so comfortable among strangers. I met some of the most genuinely kind and interesting people you could imagine. These are people I know for certain I will keep in my life.

From the very beginning of Conference there was a strong sense of family and community. Not the internet brand of "community"—a loosely tied group of faceless people typing anonymous words on a computer screen; where you can, and often *do*, say things you'd never say in *real* life; where you argue points you don't believe yourself, for the sake of argument. The Conference community was real. Everyone was welcome for who they are, and everyone had something important to offer. No one was judged, ostracized, or deemed unworthy because of where they work, how long they've been in the industry, what techniques they use, what aftercare they suggest, or whether they are a member or not. It just didn't matter. This, I believe, is the most important thing APP Conference has to offer. Yes, the classes were excellent, the round-tables were thought provoking and the expo was fantastic. None of this would have meant a single thing if the underlying base of community and respect had not been there. It's easy to feel jaded about this industry during daily life. Conference expels all of that. It is an experience difficult to put into words, and I know I am not doing it justice. So my advice to anyone considering going next year is—do it. You'll return to your every day life remembering exactly what it is you love about your job. **P**

VOLUNTEERS: ON CONFERENCE



Gabriel Gonzalez-Rodriguez
Area 51
Bilbao, Spain

What a week!! If I close my eyes I still feel the cramps that were the result of the energy and atmosphere you could feel during the five day event at the convention center of the Riviera Hotel. All this was a result of the hard work of the organizers and the response of the attendees. I would like to start by thanking all who make the conference possible, especially the APP for giving me the AI D. Scholarship so I could be more involved in the project.

For me, the conference was twice as interesting. On one end, because it is the first time I attended these specialized classes about piercing taught by professionals in the field. These professionals showed me all those small, but important details of our work. I was also taught the importance of our work using the body as a canvas. In essence, the seminars are not only about techniques, but also about ethics, which should be emphasized also.

We, as attendees, had the amazing urge to keep learning, and the speakers had a lot to communicate. Some moments felt too short, but there was always the Splash Bar where we could meet and continue talking for hours. The content of the classes was great (although I would have liked more details in the Sterilization and Jewelry Materials classes.)

On the other hand, it is always interesting to cross the ocean and check out the piercing scene outside of Europe. The conversations I had with American piercers were amazing. In the States there are a large number of professionals with a lot of information and knowledge about piercing. I saw the best jewelry ever in the Exposition. In America there are some amazing associations such as ASTM and OSHA. One of the things that surprised me was the strict laws that exist that have to be respected by piercers. What is even more strange to me are all the lawsuits involving piercing in the United States. This made me see all the responsibilities that are involved with the APP. They are not only an educator but a referee between the laws and shop owners. I can imagine this must be hard.

I would like to mention my appreciation to the APP who provided interpreters to all the Spanish-speaking people so we could enjoy the entire conference. Thanks girls. I love you!!

There are many reasons that make the APP Conference an amazing opportunity for a professional piercer, it is great to learn about techniques, know about new products, and have the best jewelry available, and of course the crazy Las Vegas night life.

I can't stop talking about all those interesting people willing to share their great knowledge. The vibes were authentic, and I can't wait to go back next year and feel those cramps again in the convention center of the Riviera Hotel.

See you all next year!! **P**

What a week!! Si cierro los ojos todavía puedo sentir los calambrazos producidos por la alfombra del centro de convenciones del Hotel Rivera, no eran mas que el fruto de la energía y buen ambiente que se respiró durante los cinco días. Fue una colaboración mutua del duro trabajo de los organizadores y de la respuesta de los asistentes, así que gracias a todos por hacer posible esta Conferencia. Muy especialmente gracias APP por otorgarme la AI D. Scholarship y de esta manera involucrarme de lleno en vuestro proyecto espero que mi trabajo haya estado a la altura.

Para mí esta conferencia era doblemente interesante por un lado sería la primera vez que recibiría seminarios tan especializados en Piercing dados por profesionales altamente cualificados los cuales te hacen apreciar pequeños pero importantes detalles del trabajo rutinario (debo admitir que han reconducido mi

...this year I walked away with a new level of respect for the current board members and also for the previous board members that have helped make this experience possible for the last 12 years.

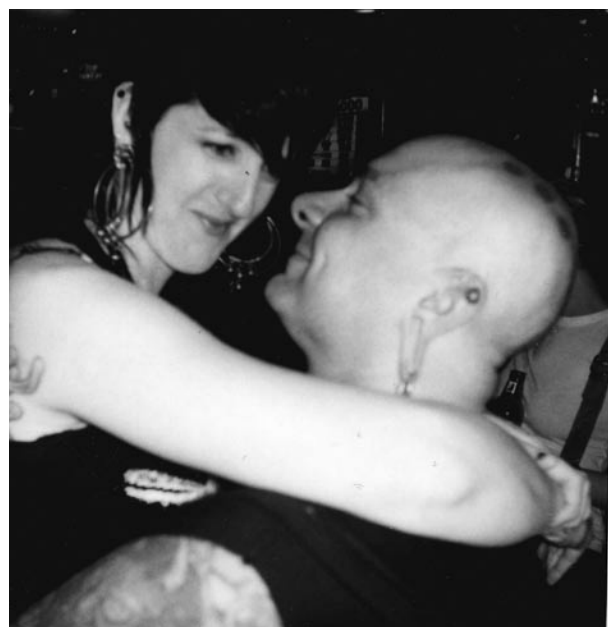
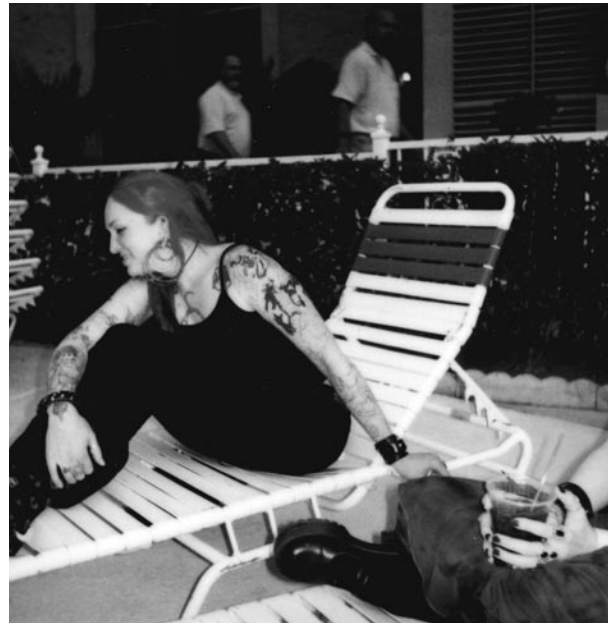
técnica) así como la trascendencia que tiene nuestro trabajo al tener como lienzo el cuerpo humano, por lo tanto no solo se aprenden técnicas sino también ética (las dos son igual de importantes). Hubo un síntoma que me hizo sentir las ganas que había de aprender, por parte de los asistentes, y las ganas de comunicar, por parte de los speakers, fue la falta de tiempo en algunas clases aunque siempre nos quedaba el bar del Hotel para alargar estas charlas hasta altas horas... Por el resto, el contenido de las clases me pareció bastante bueno aunque siempre se podría perfeccionar la clase de Materiales (me faltó más información) y algo más esquemático en los protocolos de Esterilización (esto lo haría más claro).

Por otro lado siempre es interesante cruzar los mares y ver como es la escena del Piercing fuera de Europa. SORPRENDENTE, sería la palabra que utilizaría si alguien me pide una descripción mínima de las conversaciones que tuve con un gran número de Piercers, la gran mayoría norteamericanos. En los Estados Unidos

hay buenos profesionales con unos grandes conocimientos entorno al Piercing, la mejor joyeria que he visto nunca (sin dudar!!) y asociaciones que marcan altos Standards en materiales (ASTM) y riesgos laborales (OSHA), aunque esta ultima a mi parecer deberia revisar y actualizar sus pautas. Aunque realmente lo que mas me sorprendio fueron las leyes tan restrictivas y lentas que tiene que soportar el profesional del Piercing en Estados Unidos (sin olvidar el riesgo de denuncias). Esto me hizo ver el doble trabajo de APP, no solo educar sino tambien mediar entre las leyes y los Studios (que me imagino no es tarea facil!!)

No quiero olvidarme de mencionar la gran ventaja que ha brindado APP a todos los Hispano hablantes, dos maravillosas traductoras de Español, para los que , como yo, el nivel de ingles no nos llega para mas que una mediana conversación, y así aprovechar al maximo los seminarios , sino seria por ellas yo hubiese estado perdido en la mitad de las clases. No solo traducian, tambien me cuidaban, fue un lujo tenerlas a mi lado, GRACIAS CHICAS, OS QUIERO!!

Muchas son las razones que hacen a la conferencia de la APP digna de ser visitada por lo menos una vez en la vida de un profesional de piercing (aprendizaje, nuevos productos, larga exposición de joyeria, nuevas tecnicas, Las Vegas crazy nights....) ,pero si hay una quiero subrayar es la cantidad de gente interesante con ganas de compartir conocimientos que alli se puede conocer y, la atmosfera que se respiro durante la Conferencia fue autentica. De hecho ya estoy deseando volver a sentir los calambrazos producidos por la alfombra del Hotel Rivera otra vez. See you next year!! **P**





Alejandra DeOlivera and Angel Frank in Las Vegas

VOLUNTEERS: ON CONFERENCE



Sonya Adams
Outer Limits
Anaheim, CA



Richard Banks
Murals Of Movement
St. Joplin, MO

A single week of the year, we flock to Vegas in modified masses. It doesn't matter if you wear a mullet or a mohawk. No one really cares what shop you came from, or what state you're from, just as long as you came there to learn and network, and for some of us—shop!

For those of us that volunteer, we also use the week to work our butts off for the sake of the APP. Sure, it's not a glamorous job—nor is it a paying position—but it's not supposed to be... that's why it's called volunteering. We're trying to help make the APP better, each in our own way. For me, it's a good way to stay out of trouble, meet other piercers, learn more by taking as many classes as possible, and meet new friends.

Sleep is well-earned and much needed for the volunteers. Some of us walk around like zombies, but you'll notice we still love what we're doing and most of us would be glad to do it all over again.

Without the APP Conferences, I wouldn't have my current job. I'm happy that I got the chance to meet as many great people as I did and take some of the classes. Without them, I wouldn't be half the piercer I am today.

Being a former Al D. Scholar, I was proud to volunteer again. It made me feel good to help relieve the strain the Board experiences during a week that's already insane and moving like a speeding train. It made me reflect on the previous year, see what I could improve on to make things even better for everyone. I'll be back, and volunteering again—count on it. **P**

As the 2007 APP conference approached I excitedly read everything I could find to prepare myself for Vegas. This year was my second year attending but only my first year alone and on my own dollar. In many ways I learned that the conference mirrors the ritual aspect of piercing itself. My clients are comforted (somewhat) when they learn that pain is an expected price in our body modification arrangement. This year I volunteered and had the very special privilege of seeing the Association behind the scenes, and in this way I was able to see the price of pain that is put into our Vegas ritual. The international presence was encouraging too as we shared information with body-mod practitioners of many origins.

The brief relation we share with our clients allows us a window into their lives.

We are able to see our client's motives as we interview them, and for a brief moment during the procedure we are able to see their humanity. As a volunteer this year I was able to see the Association's humanity. Strangers shared information freely and humbled themselves long enough to listen to lectures from several of my personal heroes. I can testify to the price of pain as well as the payoff. The conference was a very valuable tool and was well worth the cost of travel, lodging, and registration. **P**

RAFFLE



Caitlin McDiarmid
APP Administrator

raf·fle [raf-uhl] noun, verb, -fled, -fling

1. a form of lottery in which a number of persons buy one or more chances to win a prize. 2. to dispose of by a raffle. 3. to take part in a raffle.

Random House forgot:

4. *Second largest funding source after Conference class registration for the Association of Professional Piercers*

The APP annual raffle is *huge*. It's huge in its impact on the ability for the APP to carry out its mission, huge in its excitement, huge in its show of generosity by the vendors of our industry. In what other industry can you find 40 or so vendors, some of which are one-man operations willing to donate over \$63,000 worth of prizes? Where else do you find companies like Industrial Strength (Donation: \$33,774); Anatometal (Donation: \$7,500); and Body Circle Designs, Diablo Rojo, and Integrity Body Jewelry (Donation: \$2000 each)?

These companies are not under any obligation to donate at these amounts. They get no special perks for donating above and beyond the call. Raffle Donations every year continue to astound us; the mere process now overwhelms us. In 2007 we had 192 individual prizes, 62 winners, 43 donating companies—for a total wholesale amount of \$63,628.85!

The APP extends its warmest thanks to JD, Barry, Gale, Jimmy, IME and *all* the vending companies for continuing to support all of us—and the piercing community—through their participation in this event and fundraiser. The APP would be remiss if it didn't also recognize Darren Walters, from Blue Star, who donated the cash prize he won to the memorial fund for Josh Prentice. Thank you Darren.

Donating Companies:

Abaraka, Anatometal, Inc • Body Circle Designs • Bright Silver • Buddha Jewelry • Care-Tech Laboratories, Inc. • Custom Steel • Dave's Body Jewelry • Delicious Corsets • Desert Palms Emu Ranch • Diablo Rojo • Dragonfly • Glasswear Studios • Gorilla Glass • H2Ocean • Halftone Bodyworks • Hardass Glass • Health Educators/Sharps Management • Industrial Strength Body Jewelry • Integrity Body Jewelry • Intrepid • Intrinsic Precision • John Johnson/TPCS Vitamins • Kaos Softwear • Leroi, Inc • Modbase • Neometal, Inc. • Omerica Organic • Pain Magazine • Plaza Supply • Professional Piercing Information Systems • Professional Program Insurance Brokerage • Quetzalli Jewelry • Reign Custom • Safe Products • SM316 • Spectrum Craft • Steel Skin, Inc. • Tawapa • The Wildcat Collection **P**



Volunteer meeting, Sunday morning



Eddie Chavarria
23rd St. Body Piercing
Oklahoma City, OK

Like many, my usual conference experience would be to stay up too late: socializing, spending too much money, and then topping it off with waking up early to attend various classes. I would end the day with possibly eating a good meal and then start the process all over again.

This year, however, was a bit different for me. Though I have been a part-time volunteer for several years in the past, this year I went to the conference as a full-time volunteer with my main task being the assistant to Caitlin McDiarmid. This meant no classes, long hours, and lots of work.

My conference went from being a party/educational experience to being a working/educational experience. This year I was able to work behind the scenes and really get to see the magic and stress it takes to facilitate the conference. To most of the attendees, the conference doesn't start till 10 am or later. To the board and its assistants the days can begin as early as 7am, and for some it may not end until 2 am or later. I still had the opportunity to see the before and after of the day's events, though most of my time was spent working the APP booth. It was great to be a part of the "machine." I saw problems occur moments before a class and saw people pull together to solve it and continue the day smoothly. It was inspiring to see board members help one another in their times of need. The ability to give back to this organization and community was a great fulfilling feeling.

Though I have always been grateful for everything I have received from the conference, this year I walked away with a new level of respect for the current board members and also for the previous board members that have helped make this experience possible for the last 12 years.

In closing, though it is really hard work with long hours, I look forward to several more years of helping in any way I can to see our community keep growing larger and stronger. **P**

VOLUNTEERS: ON CONFERENCE



Warren Hiller
Darwin, Australia

We were minutes away. Descending down from the clouds and mountains, the earth went from a blackened void into a bright Technicolor rainbow in a flash. All I kept saying to myself was: “Holy mother of god! get me off of this plane and to the APP Conference!”

The landing gear bounced and the screech of the breaks echoed in my ear. I waited impatiently for the doors to open and for the airline attendants to get out of our way. As soon as possible, I bolted out the door and made my way to baggage claim. I felt myself mummifying with each passing second. The warm desert heat, it is comforting, but it sucks the moisture completely from your body.

Being in an unknown city, we looked around not knowing where to go, or who to talk to. We were a couple of crazy Canadians in Las Vegas, Nevada with clothes to wear and money to burn. We were then quickly escorted onto a shuttle bus with a rather disturbing shuttle bus driver who played non-stop Abba videos. My impatience was growing, my stress factor skyrocketing through the roof.

The Riviera, thank god! I made it! Standing outside a massive structure of what embodies “Sin City” I looked up and down the strip. I roamed aimlessly about, entering and exiting doors, YEARNING for a simple sign that read: “Hotel Registration”. After much frantic searching, I found it and thankfully it was empty. I quickly approached the person behind the desk to check in. She gave me paperwork and rambled something I did not quite catch, or simply I wasn’t paying attention to her. I grabbed my room key and followed the directions she pointed out to me on the hotel map. The loud background noise of slot machines, people, and music seemed to psychedelically pick up and fade out from place to place. I managed to find myself in the desired elevator heading up to my room.

I entered the room to pure darkness, only seeing a large mass on one bed and bags around it. I thought for a second: “Jesus Christ! Someone is already in here!” Before realizing that it was my Al D Scholarship roommate, George, I quickly and quietly laid out my travel bag and got freshened up to make my way down to the infamous Splash Bar; the place where people mutually love as well as dread to go, for they know when they arrive, they’re in for one hell of a ride.

The rest of the night is a blur. Whirlwinds of shaking hands, laughter, and partying the night away—many first timers, others veterans.

Fast forward to 8am. It was the first day on the job after having only thirty minutes of sleep. Some would buckle under this kind of off pressure, but my trip was different. “It was to be a classic confirmation of everything right and true within this community.

It was a great physical salute to the fantastic possibilities of a person in this international industry, but only for those with true grit.” And I was chock full of that, man!

Each day I, as well as my Al D Scholar associates, busted our gluteus maximus off: running, directing conference traffic flow, checking badges, giving the conference goers hand-outs and class cards. By the beginning of the second day everyone knew to have his or her badges visible for us to check. They knew to raise their hands before asking a question so we volunteers could bring a microphone to them when one was available. Everyday we came bright and early to the conference to work and make it go as smoothly as we could. The APP board members were supportive and helpful the entire time, knowing that we were all working toward the best possible conference.

At the end of each day, the drunken trance-like state took hold. Regardless of late nights and early mornings we woke with a smile knowing the night before had been wonderful even if we couldn’t remember it. An amazing day was expected with each class offering something informative for all of us to apply to our craft. You could rely on each question asked getting a knowledgeable answer from attendees and instructors. There was not a single negative vibe to be felt. Everyone yearned to expand their knowledge! Lack of discrimination was a prime example of what unity, among the industry’s community of friends and family, was all about. From the classes, to the Splash Bar, to the “Members, Vendors & Staff Party”, the Opening Party, to the very emotionally charged Banquet Dinner, the raffle winners, the memorials (RIP Josh), and the award winners—United we stand! Divided we fall!

The last hours of conference were very depressing. Tears welled up in my eyes; my lip quivered like my mom was scolding me for stealing a cookie from the cookie jar at the thought of having to say goodbye to the sea of friends, who all flooded into this desert oasis. All of us shared hopes of working and learning together, so that we can better this industry. The emotions ran high and the desire to see everyone again took over. All these good things had to come to an end. Cards, hugs, and contacts were exchanged as we parted ways, each to our respective homes. This time we parted with a few more memories and adventures to add to our lives. Each left with an anxious look in their eyes and the anticipation of next year’s conference.

The APP Conference allows us to be who we are. To celebrate who we are. To better who we are. There is absolutely nothing that rivals this amazing annual event.

Thank you to the APP Board for everything you have done! I look forward to seeing each and every one of you once again in Las Vegas at APP Conference 2008! **P**



Ebony plugs from Yaxche (formerly Spectrum Crafts), worn by James Sens

WOOD HAZARDS: A GUIDE TO POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS HARDWOODS FOR THE PIERCING COMMUNITY



Co-written by:

Erica Skadsen
Organic, LLC

Michael Sims
Esoteric Body

With the proliferation of wood jewelry manufacturers on the market, Organic LLC and Esoteric Body have been working in partnership to study various chemical compositions of individual hardwoods and their effects on the human body, in hopes of providing information that could assist you in safer wood jewelry selection. Over the past few years we have undertaken extensive research on wearable hardwoods and have found

numerous woods to be unsuitable. These potentially harmful species have documented medical reactions that may result in contact dermatitis or more extreme effects. We are not referring to respiratory reactions to sawdust, but rather to dermatological reactions due to direct skin contact with the wood.

We caution against believing a product is safe just because someone offers it to the public. Many suppliers pick their woods

because they are attractive, but often they know little about the wood itself. It is alarming that body jewelry manufacturers and distributors often do not take the responsibility to thoroughly research their products before they offer them for sale to the public; few even learn the scientific names of the species they use. This message is not meant to provoke other than to encourage study and discussion. Instead, we intend this to be a helpful guide which can be used to navigate the vast jewelry market and to make a more informed decision by knowing what the hazards are. As the popularity of wood body jewelry continues to increase, we felt that it has become a necessity to supply the community with information that we have gathered. We hope it will prevent hardwood enthusiasts from having an unnecessarily negative experience with these materials. There are many wearable hardwoods out there that are quite safe, but unfortunately there are also many species that pose risks or are unsafe for use against the skin. We encourage buyers and producers alike to undertake your own research and to find your own answers.

Despite repeated requests to do so, there are several reasons we will not publish a comprehensive list of woods that are safe and woods that are not safe for use as body jewelry materials:

- There are many thousands of wood species, and researching the chemical structure and dermatological response patterns of each is beyond the scope of this paper, and indeed, would take a lifetime of dedicated research.
- The potential to react with woods from either list remains highly variable from person to person, amongst other factors, and thus there can be no universally valid safe or unsafe list.
- Any attempt at doing so oversimplifies the complex nature of the issue, and would give a false impression of homogeneity to an extremely diverse range of materials.

Health Concerns and Risks

While much of the research available to woodworkers is a good starting point, it was not designed as a guide to the wearability of woods. The problem is that most documentation specifically addresses wood dust and not actual skin contact with wood. Wood dust produces an extremely large amount of surface area, which has a much greater potential to produce problematic reactions during the manufacturing process than exposure to the amount of surface area that is in contact with the skin in the case of completed wood products.

Interestingly, most published research seems to base reports on only a few case studies, many of which go back up to 100 years; some of studies list only common names and not specific species of wood, and results are not obtained by clinical studies with large sample groups. However, these isolated cases should not be entirely dismissed; they are relevant in showing patterns of

cross-sensitivities, and many have been accompanied by positive patch tests from extracts of the offending compounds.

The structure of wood is primarily composed of the biological polymers cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin, along with some inorganic minerals. In addition, secondary metabolites are produced in wood which build up in the center of the tree, becoming its heartwood. These substances are called extractives. Besides providing characteristic color and scent to wood, they can provide chemicals beneficial to humans, but may also cause health problems (such as allergic reactions), as they are essentially toxic biocides made to defend the tree against decay or predatory attacks. "Some of these act as food reserves for latent growth periods, some as hardening agents, and others protect against mechanical injuries or attack by bacteria, fungi, insects and larger animals (Dietrichs 1958). Some are metabolic by-products or end-products of no apparent use to the tree."¹

Exposure to the chemistry of any substance has the potential to cause biological effects. Acute exposure is described as "a single, brief contact" of varying intensity, while the cumulative effects of "repeated or prolonged contact" of chronic exposure

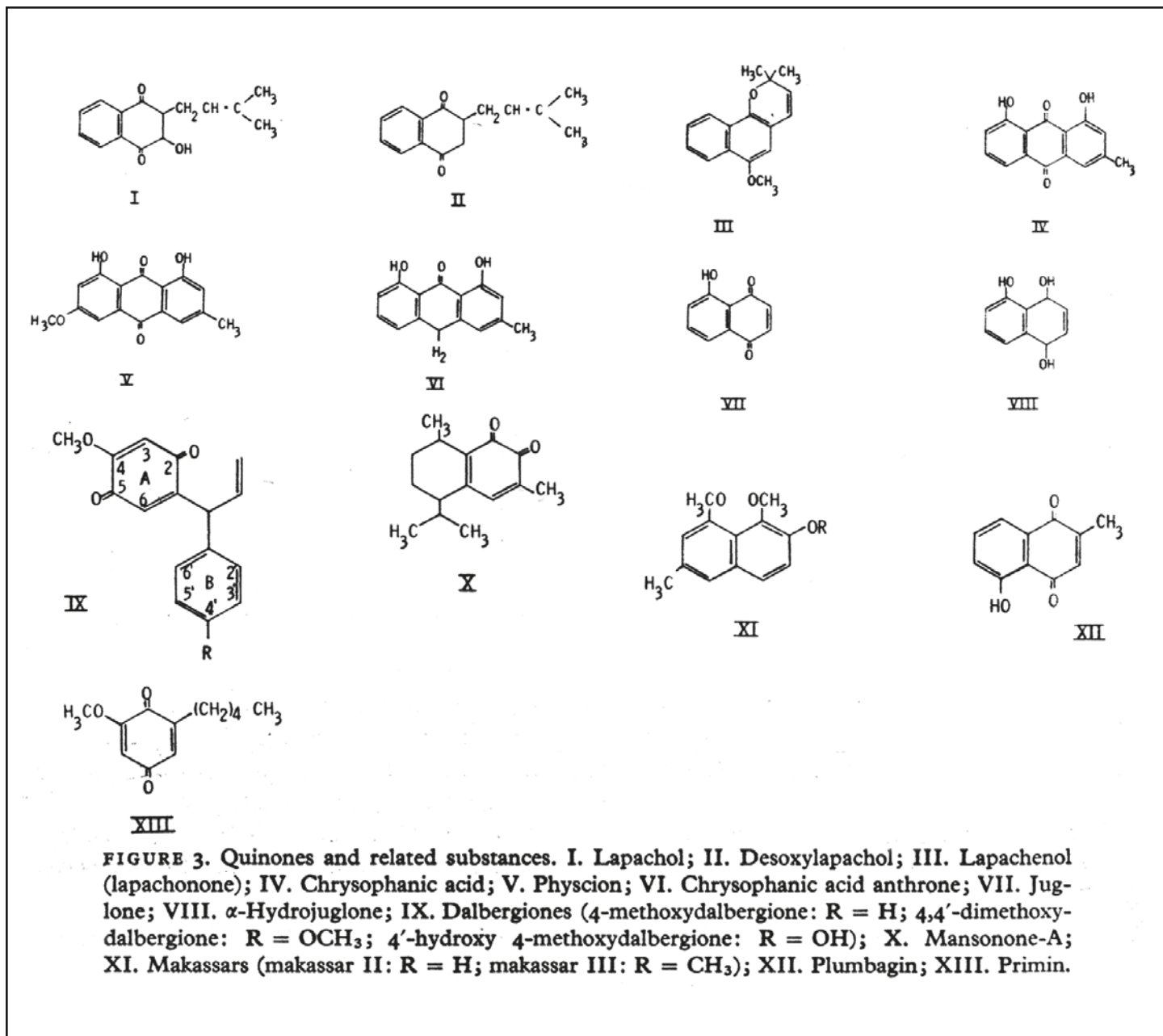
These potentially harmful species have documented medical reactions that may result in contact dermatitis or more extreme effects.

may not occur until a greater length of time has passed. Most problems from skin exposure to wood will be localized, rather than systemic - involving the whole body when chemicals are absorbed into the blood stream, which is more of a risk when dealing with the respiratory effects of wood dust. Permanence and reversibility of the effects depend on a variety of factors, including degree and site of exposure, type of chemical, and the reaction history and level of sensitivity in the person exposed.

"The main effect is *irritation*." An irritant is a substance that causes an excessive response, soreness, or inflammation, which can entail heat, swelling, redness, or pain. ... "This can be caused by skin contact with the wood, its dust, its bark, its sap, or even lichens growing on the bark. Irritation can, in some species of wood, lead to nettle rashes or irritant dermatitis. These effects tend to appear on the forearm, backs of the hands, the face (particularly eyelids) neck, scalp and the genitals. On average, they take 15 days to develop."²

While acute effects from primary irritants can occur immediately upon exposure, latency periods can range from a few hours to several months. "Symptoms usually only persist as long as the affected skin site remains in contact with the source of irritation... Symptoms subside when contact with the irritant is removed."²

"*Sensitization dermatitis* is more problematic and is usually



caused by skin exposure to fine wood dust of certain species.”² Sensitization is “an allergic reaction to a substance which is usually irreversible” resulting in hypersensitivity and susceptibility to being overly responsive. Dermatitis is inflammation of the skin. ...” This is also referred to as allergic contact dermatitis and results in similar skin effects to those produced by skin irritants. Once sensitized, the body sets up an allergic reaction, and the skin may react severely if subsequently exposed to very small amounts of the wood dust.”² “Cross-sensitization can occur between two different species if both contain structurally related sensitizers.”³

Allergic Response

“An allergy is the adverse health effects which result from the stimulation of specific immune responses.”⁴ “Allergic contact dermatitis is a form of delayed-type hypersensitivity reaction which is dependent upon cell-mediated immune function and the activity of T lymphocytes.”⁴ The most frequent form of allergic reaction is to small molecular weight materials such as chemicals and proteins. These reactions are better known as contact hypersensitivity, skin sensitization, and allergic contact dermatitis. Delayed-type reactions (as opposed to those with more immediate effects from primary irritants) occur in two stages:

- “Phase I (Induction): Initial contact... may result in [the allergen] penetrating the stratified squamous epithelial cells of the skin and binding to large dendritic (branched) white blood cells in the epidermis called Langerhans cells. The Langerhans cell (with [the allergen] on its membrane) migrates to a nearby lymph node where special white blood cells, called effector T-cells, are programmed to recognize [the allergen]. There are literally millions of effector T-cells roaming throughout the blood and lymphatic system, each with special receptor molecules on their membranes for a particular allergenic chemical. ... T-cells patrol our circulatory system looking for invading cells and viruses.”⁵
- “Phase II (Elicitation): If [contact occurs with the offending allergen] during a subsequent encounter... an effector T-cell may encounter it bound to a Langerhans cell and attach to it by a complicated and specific recognition system. The effector T-cell then produces more clones of itself and releases special proteins called lymphokines which attract a legion of different white blood cells, including macrophages and cytotoxic (“killer”) T-cells. The new army of white blood cells releases cytokines or proteins which destroy everything in the vicinity... including other skin cells, thus producing a blistering rash... Milder effects range from redness (vasodilation) and itching (nerve injury) to small blisters (vesicles and bullae).”⁵

Stronger effects can result in anaphylaxis, which can occur in response to any allergen; while anaphylaxis occurs infrequently, it is life-threatening and can occur at any time. While the percentage of people that may react to or become sensitive to the compounds found in wood is small, it will always remain a possibility. Risks include prior history of any type of allergic reaction, though these effects can also occur in those without previous reactions.

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES: Quinones

The culprit behind most of these allergies is a group of naturally occurring chemicals called quinones. They represent just a few of the numerous extractives residing in the heartwood and other tissues of various species, which are produced as defensive agents against fungal, microbial, and other predator attacks (including woodworkers and jewelry collectors). Quinones are often used to make dyes; for example, lawsone, the active ingredient in the henna plants *Lawsonia inermis* and *L. alba*, is the red-orange colored pigment 2-hydroxy-1,4-naphthaquinone, a molecule known as hennotannic acid. Though they also have potential cosmetic (such as their use in skin-lightening formulas) and medicinal uses (various quinones have been studied for their antibacterial, anti-tumor, and cancer fighting abilities) in non-allergic humans, quinones play a major role in allergic contact dermatitis caused by plants.

The primary “allergens are benzoquinones or naphthoquinones but also compounds, such as catechols and other phenolic or flavonoid compounds, which are bioconverted [metabolized] into ortho-quinones or para-quinones.”³ These derivatives can covalently bond to skin proteins. Since they are not recognized by the immune system, they are attacked. Catechol is a main constituent of urushiol, which is the allergen in poison ivy. Certain types of coumarins can also be sensitizers when they form ortho-quinones via enzymatic oxidation within the skin.

It is possible that once sensitized to one of these quinones that cross reactions to similar quinones and/or compounds can develop. In other words, a reaction to a quinone component of one wood can make you more susceptible to future reactions to other wood allergens.

Other compounds

Some of the other compounds that have been known to cause harmful responses include: alkaloids and glycosides (“systemic effects, pharmacological rather than allergic”), long-chain phenols (“the strongest skin sensitizers,” especially “the catechols” in urushiol “of the poison ivy family” Anacardiaceae), furocoumarins and coumarins (sweet-smelling photosensitizing and anticoagulant phenolic compounds; may be carcinogenic and partly responsible for skin reactions but has yet to be proven), dalbergiones (severe skin irritants), saponins (effective through broken skin only), stilbenes (which “occur in allergenic woods, but only chlorophorin... and coniferyl benzoate... are known to sensitize”), terpenes (“including delta-3-carene from turpentine, sesquiterpene lactones... and other sensitizing” compounds which can be within lichens and “liverworts found on bark, and euphorbol and other complex terpenes of uncertain toxicity found in the latex of Euphorbiaceae”), aldehydes, and ketones.¹

Not all substances have equal potential to yield dermatological problems. Some, such as the dalbergiones and catechols, are much more effective than others. Even the different types of quinones can cause varying results.

Included below is a list of some of the more popular woods that are not suitable to wear due to these risks. There are other hardwoods that are notorious for causing dangerous reactions - which may include surprisingly strong reactions such as cardiac and nervous system effects, cancer, and genotoxicity - such as: **afromosia** (*Pericopsis elata*), **Australian blackwood** (*Acacia melanoxylon*), **greenheart** (*Chlorocardium rodiei*), **mansonia** (*Mansonia altissima*), **sassafras** (*Sassafras albidum*), and **satinwood** (*Chloroxylon swietenia*), as well as various softwoods such as: **cedar** (*Thuja spp.*), **hemlock** (*Tsuga spp.*), **pine** (*Pinus spp.*), and **yew** (*Taxus spp.*); however, these are not discussed here because we have fortunately not seen their attempted use in body jewelry.

Popular woods to avoid, to minimize the risk of adverse effects

Most of this information is taken from: *Botanical Dermatology: Plants and Plant Products Injurious to the Skin*.⁶ Bibliographies

Toxic activity is specific to a wood species. Knowing the exact species is important in establishing what the potential toxic effects may be.

listing the works by the authors cited in parenthesis can be found in the BoDD Database. ⁶

We will continue to expand this list as we further our research. Note that we are listing research specific to the heartwood of trees; toxins can be found in a species that is not found in its wood. For example, cyanide is found in apple seeds, but the fruit is edible, even though it is in close proximity to this toxin. “Toxic activity is specific to a wood species. Knowing the exact species is important in establishing what the potential toxic effects may be. Individual wood species... are very easily confused. For example, ‘rosewood’ may be used for up to 30 different species; and an individual species may have up to ten different trade names (Hausen 1981). An additional difficulty is that trees vary within a species. One specimen may contain low levels of its toxic agent and the next contain much higher levels. So experience may not be a reliable guide.” ²

Dalbergia spp (*Rosewoods*): “The discovery of sensitizing quinones in other woods such as teak...led Schulz and Dietrichs (1962) to look for similar substances in *Dalbergia nigra* and *Dalbergia retusa*. They found three quinones which they called *Dalbergia* quinones A, B and C, and demonstrated by patch tests on patients that these were the sensitizers, the strongest being R-3,4-dimethoxydalbergione... They have now been found in most other *Dalbergia* spp.” ⁶

Dalbergia cearensis (*Kingwood, de Violette, Violet Wood, Violetta*): contains a dalbergione, “described as a very severe skin irritant, often leading to persistent ulceration.” ⁶

Dalbergia cochinchinensis (*Laos Rosewood, Thai Rosewood, Cochin Rosewood*): “contain R-4-methoxydalbergione and other quinones.” ⁶

Dalbergia congestiflora (*Mexican Kingwood*): contains a dalbergione. ⁶

Dalbergia cultrate (*Burmese Rosewood*): contains a dalbergione. ⁶

Dalbergia decipularis and Dalbergia frutescens (*Tulipwood*): contains a dalbergione. ⁶

Dalbergia latifolia (*East Indian Rosewood, Sonokoling, Sono Wood*): contain R-4-methoxydalbergione and other quinones. ⁶

Dalbergia maritime (*Madagascar Rosewood, Bois de Rose*): contains a dalbergione. ⁶

Dalbergia melanoxydon (*African Blackwood*): “contains several quinones including S-4'-hydroxy-4-methoxydalbergione... and S-4-methoxydalbergione.” ⁶

Dalbergia nigra (*Brazilian Rosewood*): “contains R-4-methoxydalbergione and other quinones (Schulz and Dietrichs 1962).” ⁶ This species is also endangered, and is listed under CITES Appendix I as threatened with extinction.

Dalbergia retusa (*Cocobolo*): “contains S-4'-hydroxy-4-methoxydalbergione, R-4-methoxydalbergione and other quinones and phenols” ⁶ such as obtusaquinone. ⁷

Dalbergia stevensonii (*Honduran Rosewood, Nagaed Wood, Palissandre Honduras*): contains a dalbergione. ⁶

Acer saccharum (*Sugar Maple*): “This species has been found to contain 2,6-dimethoxy-1,4-benzoquinone which is a known contact allergen.” ^{6,7}

Betula spp (*Birch*): various parts of the tree contain salicylates such as methyl salicylate ⁶, which can cause dermatitis; cross-sensitivities could occur in those with aspirin allergies. Birch also listed as sensitizer. ⁸

Cinnamomum camphora (*Camphorwood*): “The wood contains camphor and borneol.” “Following cases of serious toxicity and even death in children, products containing more than trace quantities of camphor have now largely been withdrawn from the market (Reynolds 1996).” “Can cause dermatitis and shortness of breath” and camphor causes mild heart stimulant activity. Topically applied, it can penetrate the skin. ⁶

Cordia dodecandra (*Ziricote, Zericote*) and **Cordia elaeagnoides** (*Bocote, Becote*): Cross reactions are possible with these species if sensitivity to R-3,4-dimethoxydalbergione (in pao ferro and *Dalbergia* species), obtusaquinone (in cocobolo), and macassar quinone (in Macassar ebony) has developed. “Some members of this family [Ehretiaceae] appear to have the capacity to sensitize on contact. The cordiachromes, which are terpenoid benzoquinones, appear to be the compounds responsible.” ⁶

Diospyros celebica (*Macassar Ebony*): contains “macassar II, a β -naphthol derivative” that “may become oxidised in vivo to macassar quinone. This compound has been shown to have sensitizing properties... Cross-sensitivity to other naphthoquinones has been demonstrated”. Cross-sensitivity has also occurred “to R-3,4-dimethoxydalbergione (found in pao ferro), obtusaquinone (found in cocobolo), and macassar quinone (found in Macassar ebony).”

“The yellow naphthoquinone pigment, plumbagin (methyl juglone) occurs in a colourless combined form and is liberated from root tissue by acid treatment. (Harborne 1966)... Plumbagin is also found in some species of the families Droseraceae, Ebenaceae, and Euphorbiaceae (Thomson 1971)... Plumbagin has an irritating odor and causes sneezing; it stains the skin to a purple color and has a vesicant action.”⁶

We have only found evidence that quinones have been proven to occur in the wood of the ebony species *Diospyros celebica* (widely distributed), and *D. melanoxylon*⁷ (not normally commercially available).

Guibourtia tessmannii (*Bubinga*): contains 2,6-dimethoxybenzoquinone⁷, and can cause dermatitis.^{2,8}

Machaerium scleroxylon (*Pau Ferro, Pao Ferro*): “Dalbergiones were found to be the allergenic components of the wood”⁶, including R-3,4-dimethoxydalbergione^{6,7}, a strong sensitizer and irritant.

Milletia laurentii (*Wenge*): can give dermatitis and induce “central nervous system effects.”² Wenge contains 2,6-dimethoxybenzoquinone.⁷

Peltogyne densiflora (*Purpleheart*): “Dalbergiones have been isolated from the wood (De Sousa et al 1967).”⁶

Piratinera guianensis and **P. paraense** syn. **Brosimum guianense** and **B. paraense** (*Snakewood and Satine Bloodwood, Cardinalwood*): Quinones were discovered in the wood (Hausen 1970).⁶

Pterocarpus soyauxii (*Padauk*): can cause irritation of the skin, allergic contact dermatitis⁹, and sensitization. Cross-sensitivity has occurred with use of ziricote, bocote, pao ferro, cocobolo, and Macassar ebony when sensitivity has been developed to related quinones.⁶

We are still in the process of determining the exact allergenic compound(s) within padauk wood.

Quercus rubra (*Red Oak*) contains 2,6-dimethoxybenzoquinone.⁷

Salix spp (*Willow*): contains salicin, a phenolic glucoside, and is a precursor of aspirin; also has saligenin, a known contact allergen.⁶ Willow is also listed as a sensitizer.⁸

Swietenia macrophylla (*American Mahogany, Bigleaf Mahogany*) contains 2,6-dimethoxybenzoquinone,⁷; trees from the Neotropics

are listed under CITES Appendix II as protected species.

Tectona grandis (*Teak*): The “dermatic compounds” (sensitizers) lapachol (aka tecomin, a quinone), desoxylapachol (a naphthoquinone), and lapachonole (aka lapachonone) were found in *Tectona* wood. Lapachol has been called “a known elicitor of contact dermatitis” and a “sensitizing agent.” “Desoxylapachol and lapachenole...are potent contact allergens.” “Local races of teak and even individual trees vary greatly in desoxylapachol content.” “Lapachenole has been shown to be both irritant and sensitizing by Sandermann & Barghoorn (1955).”⁶

Tetraclinis articulata (*Thuja Burl*) - a type of softwood: “The heartwood of this species is known to contain several dermatologically active compounds including thymoquinone, carvacrol, and β - and γ -thujaplicins.”⁶

Other wood-related products

Dymondwood[®] is a manufactured plywood product consisting of laminated layers of hardwood (likely birch) veneer which have been colored with mono-azo acid dyes and then compressed under intense heat and pressure with phenol formaldehyde resin into a dense, durable, highly polished material. Interestingly, Bakelite, a type of early thermoset synthetic resin, is a polymer of phenol with formaldehyde. Many Dymondwood[®] varieties go by cute trade names, but it can usually be identified by its appearance as a brightly colored wood product with consistently spaced stripes in contrasting colors not normally appearing in untreated wood. Besides cropping up periodically in the body piercing world as earplugs, it is common to find it utilized in other products such as pipes and bracelets.

Phenol, also known as carbolic acid or hydroxybenzene, is toxic and corrosive. The dangers posed by formaldehyde, including its role as a carcinogen, are also substantial. According to the MSDS for Dymondwood[®], “Phenol and formaldehyde may be released in small quantities from product under normal conditions.” “Some people may develop dermatitis from repeated and prolonged exposure to unfinished product.” “Laboratory data indicates that certain acid dyes may be mutagenic in animals.”¹⁰ The azo dyes (azo is a chemical compound containing one pair nitrogen atoms with a double bond between them) may release aromatic amines if the azo linkages are broken down via enzymes, or possibly via heat and photochemical reactions, though intact azo dyes are unlikely to be absorbed by the skin. However, these aromatic amines have been linked to serious long-term health effects, including links to cancer in humans, so the possibility of their presence is of grave concern. Incidentally, azo dyes are sometimes used as pigments in tattoo ink.

Unfortunately, dyes are also commonly used overseas to make lighter woods appear as black ebony. These commonly include aniline or PPD. **Aniline** is a blood toxin that is easily absorbed through the skin, which may cause allergic skin reactions and irritation, contact dermatitis, sensitization, is a possible carcinogen, and is considered very toxic to terrestrial and aquatic life.¹¹ **PPD** (para-Phenylenediamine, aka para-Aminoaniline,

1,4-Benzenediamine, or 1,4-Diaminobenzene), is an aromatic amine dye, used to color hair, and used extensively in SouthEast Asia to apply temporary black “henna” “tattoos.” It is easily absorbed through the skin, and has been called a significant allergen and toxin. It can cause allergic contact dermatitis, cross-sensitization to other chemicals, rash, blisters, chemical burns, and permanent skin changes such as scarring, renal failure, anaphylactic shock, or even death.

There is a huge range of chemicals used to treat wood, ranging from pesticides, fungicides, preservatives, and fumigation meant to kill insects and microorganisms, most often before lumber is offered for sale, to finishes such as oils, waxes, lacquers, and varnishes, as well as adhesives used to join inlay materials or splice wood together for a striped appearance. Each has a chemical makeup that should be thoroughly investigated before their utilization in wood intended to be in contact with skin.

Conclusion

After lengthy research we have put together this guide to help educate shop owners, end users, and hopefully some of the manufacturers producing potentially dangerous products. While reactions will not occur in all individuals, they can range from irritating to life-threatening, and the possibility that these effects may be elicited, along with the risk of becoming cross-sensitized to other materials, should be taken very seriously. It is up to you to be informed about what you are buying and putting into contact with the human body. Wood jewelry is one of the most comfortable and grounding materials we have available to us, and can be both an aesthetically pleasing and safe material if potential hazards are identified, understood, and avoided.

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Check out either of our websites for updates, which will be added as information is acquired.

<http://www.organicjewelry.com/woodhazards.html>

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IF YOU THINK YOU ARE HAVING A REACTION TO WOOD, REMOVE THE ITEM AND SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY P

COMPETITION



James Weber
APP Medical Liaison
Infinite Body Piercing, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

Unfortunately, like most employees in my shop's 13-year history, Luis and I did not part on good terms when he left some five years ago.

A week or so after he left my employment, the owner of several of the tattoo shops in the city came over to talk to me. He inquired about Luis' leaving, and asked if I would have any strong objections to him hiring Luis for a new tattoo and piercing shop he had taken over down the street—six buildings down from my shop. After he left, I realized he wasn't asking as much as he was diplomatically telling me he was hiring Luis to compete against us.

Such is how things work on "tattoo and piercing row" in Philadelphia. I can stand in the doorway of my shop, looking out, and see four tattoo shops on the other side of the street. In the city, all the piercing and tattoo shops are located within a three-block area. On one block (where my shop is located) there are six shops. All totaled, there are nine shops in those three blocks: five shops doing tattoos only, one tattoo shop that sometimes pierces, one tattoo and piercing combo (where Luis works), and two piercing only shops. My shop is in this last category.

All of these shops opened within about two years of each other—in 1994 and 1995 when tattooing and piercing really hit the mainstream and everyone wanted a part of the profits. With this influx of "undesirable" shops flooding the area, the local business and neighborhood association succeeded in getting a zoning overlay implemented. While all existing piercing and tattoo shops are "grandfathered" in, *no new piercing and/or tattoo shops are allowed to open in our business district*. While those of us with established business felt unfairly attacked because of the prejudicial nature of the legislation, we were all more than a little pleased at the elimination of future competition.

This also meant that no one was going anywhere, and we had better get along with our neighbors, because we were stuck with them.

There have been the typical feuds through the years; piercing and tattooing is not just any business. Many actions were taken as insults, words flew back and forth—sometimes stopping short of fists, sometimes not. But for the most part everyone was civil—we had to be. We walked past each other's shops on the way to our own; we saw each other out at the same bars and restaurants; we ran into each other getting coffee each morning. As shop owners, we traded employees—when someone left one shop, he/she very frequently got a job at another on the same block.

And now, over a decade later, the piercing "pie" is pretty firmly divided in Philadelphia. This is not meant to imply that everything is great in our area: We still see our share of bad work, we still hear stories about shops in the area piercing minors, working on clients that are intoxicated. Each area has shops that cater to the lowest common denominator, and our city is no exception.

But each shop caters to its particular clientele; each shop does what it does best. Luis has his clients, and we have ours. While we try our hardest to make everyone who walks into our store one of ours, we're not adverse to sending people to another one if we know they can be better served. When we throw out drunks, we call up the street to tell them they're probably be seeing them soon. And while we don't usually discuss it, we keep our piercing prices similar

COMPETITION



Luis Garcia
APP International Liaison
NoKaOi
Philadelphia, PA

In almost every large city in the US—and many of the smaller ones—there are going to be multiple tattoo and/or piercing shops competing against each other. Here in Philadelphia, the competition is pretty tight, with three other shops that offer piercing within four blocks of me. One of these shops—Infinite Body Piercing—is on my same block, and is where I used to work. One would think that this would make the competition even tougher. Fortunately, this has not proven to be the case.

Sure, for the first year or so after I left their employ to work for my current boss, there was this cloud over the relationship between both of our shops. But thankfully, after some time and some growth on both our parts, we have a good relationship. The approach that I've taken is: I know that Infinite is clean and safe. I know that they carry the same quality jewelry that I do. And I also know that their piercers are well trained—I cannot say the same for all the other shops that offer piercing in our area. Even though I would obviously rather have clients get pierced at my shop, if they choose not to get pierced at NoKaOi, I would like to see them go somewhere just as good.

There are small differences in the services that both of our shops offer—I never hesitate to send people over to Infinite for something that I might not feel comfortable doing, and vice versa. There are also instances where I might not have a certain piece of jewelry in stock, and Infinite does. We also look out for each other when it comes to problematic clients: When I get someone trying to use a fake ID, I make sure to give Infinite a call. The same goes for potential clients that are drunk and/or disorderly.

This accommodating attitude has worked out well for both our shops and us. Clients often make the comment that it's good to see two competing shops working together for the good of the clientele. We do have different ways of running things, and very different atmospheres, and there will always be people that prefer one to the other. Conversely, there will be people who don't have a preference, but appreciate having two places to choose from who aren't going to shit-talk each other, or make them feel bad for going somewhere else.

I encourage other shop owners and piercers out there to come to an amicable state of competition. It might just work out the best for everyone. **P**

as well—we both agree that cost alone should not decide whose service the client ultimately chooses.

Things were understandably tense with Luis and I at first, but we didn't have the option of being petty to each other—we work six doors apart. And we didn't need to be. After all these years, we found we were different people than when we had our employer/employee relationship. We are often at each other's shop—I give a warm hello to Luis' new boss when I see him, and Luis is a good friend to my employees. We now serve together on the Board of the APP, and have the benefit of years working down the street from each other—as competition. **P**

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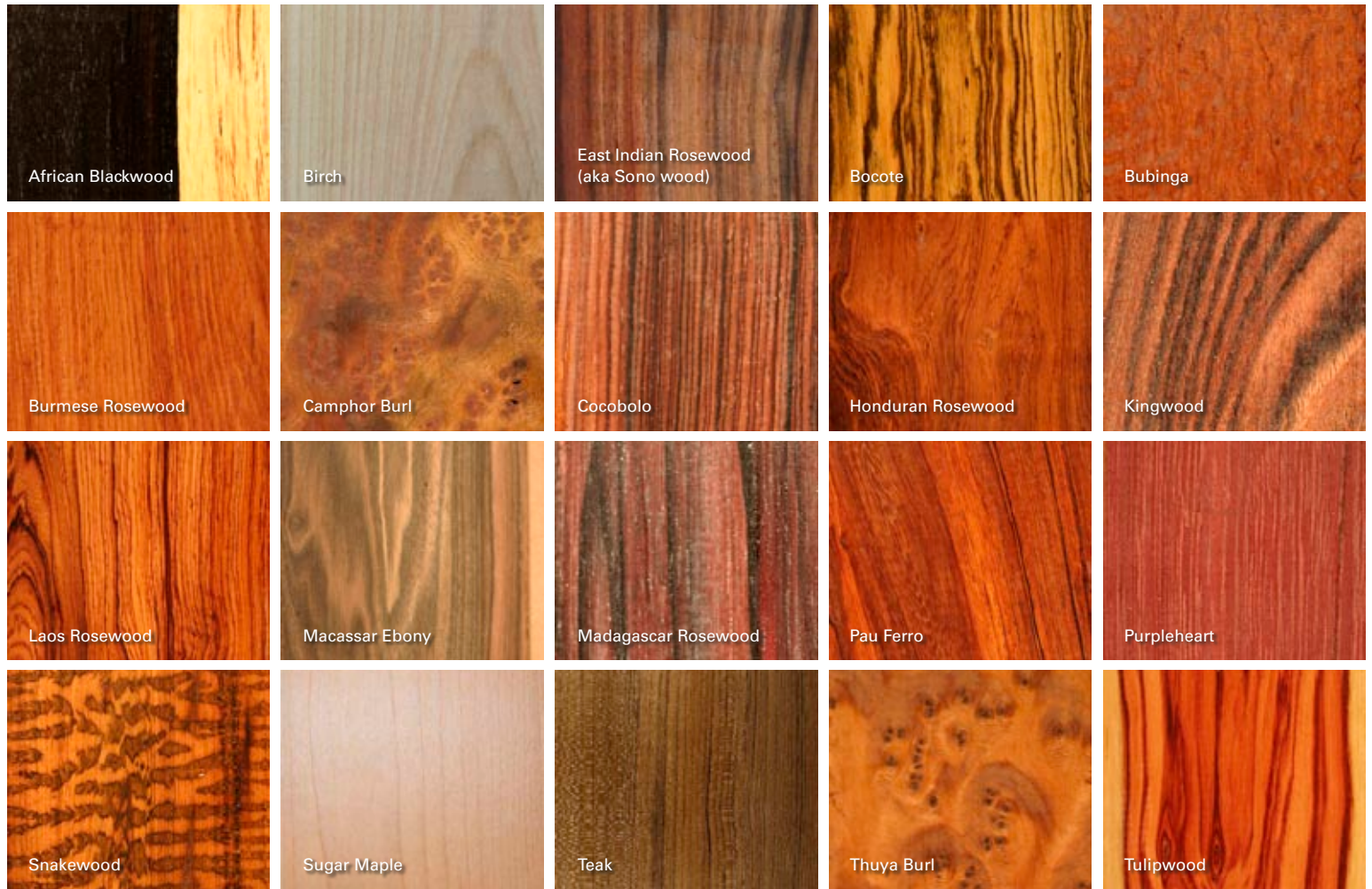


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Pictured is a small selection of woods that are potentially hazardous when used for body jewelry. See full article on page 25.



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