



FUNDRAISING FOR THE BPA

GENE GOWEN

Oculo Visitant Gallery

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

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

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



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

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

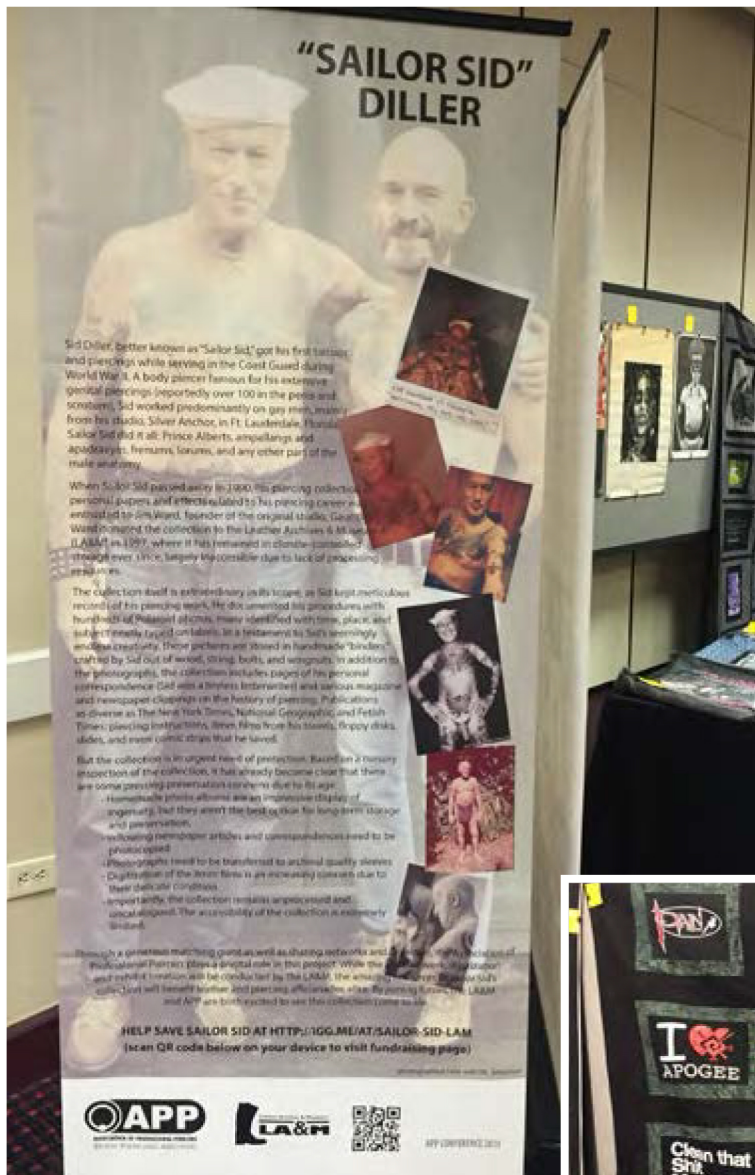
I spent the remainder of 2015 and the first few months of 2016 working on gathering items that we could use in our fundraising. The idea was simply to create something that would be historically relevant to our industry, while still being something that the average Conference attendee would be interested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

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

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

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

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



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

