

THE BPA EXHIBIT



MATTE ERICKSON

Alpha-Omega Body Piercing

"If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree."

—Michael Crichton

January 2015 started off with a bang. Emails, Facebook notifications, and text messages started flooding our inboxes, as serious discussion began in preparation of creating the Body Piercing Archives. It had begun. Months of casual conversations were now not so casual. They had intent and a purpose to preserve the history of the body piercing industry. The core players were in place with only a general idea of where this was going to take us. The boxes started arriving. Details were worked out. Goals were set. All the pieces were falling into place.

One month later, the three of us (Paul King, Becky Dill, and myself) sat on the floor of Paul's apartment discussing proper handling of ephemera and other technical details before digging through the boxes and envelopes that had arrived over the last few weeks. Time flew by. We were completely lost in the moment. Eight hours later, we set a time for our next meeting and said our goodbyes.

It took three meetings to get all the items photographed and categorized by year. During this time we were constantly receiving data, more ephemera, and doing individual research on our off time. Finally, we got to sit back, admire our work, and decide just how we were going to put all this information together into a cohesive display. Over the next two months, we were averag-

ing an eight hour, in person, meeting every two weeks. This involved an insane amount of reading and scanning, as well as at least a half dozen layout changes.

As Conference drew closer, our lives became organized chaos to say the least. Long hours and late night phone calls became the norm. Contributors were pushed to their limits—thank you from the bottom of my heart, Barry Blanchard and Gus Diamond—and vendors were put to the test. We literally received the last

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printed items 3 days before I was to leave for Las Vegas.

The first day of Conference I found myself standing in Bronze 4 with stacks of boxes. With each box that was opened, our dream came closer to fruition. The next two days were spent unpacking items, filling flash drives, and building a beautiful tribute. With the help of several volunteers, the room slowly took shape and became the Body Piercing Archive's first exhibit.

First thing Wednesday morning, the doors finally opened to the public. As our peers filed through the exhibit, there were a myriad of emotions. People laughed. Several people cried. People were chomping at the

bit to give docent tours—thank you to all the people that volunteered—and even more were excited to hear the stories first hand. There was a definite energy in the air. One of my personal highlights (one of many) was David Vidra watching the slideshow, talking about all the people in the photos in a way only Mama could. Many attendees also brought with them personal stories to share and add to what our docents were offering. This all contributed to the experience. Many stories were passed back and forth between attendees as banners chocked full of data were read, analyzed, and discussed. The banner topics included key articles, Board Members, membership, Conferences, *The Point* covers (and evolution), volunteer information, Al D. Scholarship recipients, International Conferences, and a touching tribute to Raelyn Gallina. Information on the Sailor Sid archive preservation fundraising campaign and a sneak peek at next year's exhibition was also included.

Over the two and a half days of the exhibit, hundreds of people filed through. Some reminisced, some learned a few things, many learned quite a bit. I think everyone who attended took something away with them that, I hope, will stay with them for many years to come. I believe our goal was met and exceeded based on the feedback from the attendees. It has truly been a labor of love.

This exhibit could not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of Paul King and Becky Dill. I would also like to thank Be-



The altar in memory of Raelyn Gallina

thrah Szumski for never throwing anything away and for having a memory like a steel trap, Caitlin McDiarmid for keeping great records, Barry Blanchard for taking and keeping so many photos, Gus Diamond for having the foresight to shoot lots of video when nobody else was, Brian Skellie for helping fill in some of the blanks, Fakir Musafar and Babs McGary for their generous donations for the Raelyn tribute, and all the people that allowed us to pick their brains. Also a big thanks to *The Point* staff for getting the word out there for us.

If you would like more information on or would like to make donations to the Body Piercing Archive, please email us at archive@safepiercing.org.



Mic Rawls and Melissa Kaye sharing a moment

IMAGES FROM THE BODY PIERCING ARCHIVE EXHIBIT

