

Who, what, why and where to get a tattoo

By Mike Rose
Of The Print

Large, bright yellow letters burst out from the black background: "TATTOOING."

The American Tattoo Company on Molalla Avenue is hard to ignore. Inside, an entire wall is splashed with a rainbow of colors. There are several thousand tattoo designs, covering about as many topics.

Tattoo artist Bill Brong was running the shop when my associate and I arrived. With used car salesman finesse, I talked her into getting a tattoo. She was a self-admitted guinea pig.

Brong has been a professional tattoo artist for eight years. He apprenticed under his current partner, Tom Slick. When Brong was 12 years old, he found an ad in the back of a magazine for the world's only tattoo school. He sent in 25 cents for a brochure. "I was too young to get into the school, but I always kept my head geared for tattooing," Brong said.

The guinea pig tried to choose a tattoo design while I talked with Brong. Brong sports Japanese-style tattoos which cover his forearms. "I've got 40 hours work on me and I've got 40 more hours to go, and that's just for two arm pieces," Brong said. "I'm only about half done."

Brong has done body pieces, which consist of both arms, chest and back being tattooed.

Brong said, "Right now, I'm working on a really intricate piece. It's taken about four years so far."

An entire body piece costs about \$5,000 at the American Tattoo Company, while \$10,000 or \$15,000 for a body piece in San Francisco or Japan is not uncommon, according to Brong. Tattoos range from \$15 on up.

"Tattooing is the most exacting form of art," Brong said. "When you work on canvas, if you mess up, you just get another canvas. With someone's skin, you just get one chance."

All types of people visit the tattoo studio, according to Brong, "everyone from bank executives to bikers." Brong added, "I feel that a tattoo is a personal expression. I've done a lot of unusual tattoos, but each person's head is in a different space. I don't consider any tattoo as strange."

Tattooing is increasing in popularity. The current trend is Japanese-style tattooing. Very fine lines, lots of colors and designs are used in this style. The subject matter is not necessarily figures.

Old photographs of carnival side show people adorn the tattoo booth. One is of a woman with a large snake entwined around her body. There is a small snapshot of a man with a tattoo on the top of his head.

Brong had the young lady volunteer sit cross-legged with



GETTING A TATTOO isn't as painful or messy as most of us think. Indeed, it's an art form.

her bare foot and ankle resting on his knee. "We don't get a lot of women customers, just a few. In places like San Francisco, almost 50 percent of the customers are women," he said.

He took a straight razor and shaved a small spot on her ankle. "I met my girlfriend tattooing. She came to me a little over a year ago. I asked her out that night, and we have been together ever since, but that's not the common practice," he related.

"I get along with almost everybody," Brong said. "After all, would you sit in that chair and give me a bunch of static while I'm putting something on you that you are going to wear the rest of your life? Think about it."

With a ball point pen, Brong drew a nickel-sized butterfly on the volunteer's ankle. The pen contains a special ink that is non-allergenic. "My parents would have an attack if they knew I was doing this," said the volunteer. On some designs, a plastic stencil is used. Next, Brong covered the area with a topical bacteriant.

"Is this your first tattoo?" Brong asked the volunteer. "Well, just relax. I'll stop any time you want." The outlining machine, a hand-held electrical instrument, started to buzz. The machine punches pinholes in the skin. He touched the device to her ankle.

There was no grimace of pain. "It stings a little, but it's really not a pain," said the volunteer in a calm voice. It was almost like she was getting a pedicure.

Modern technology has made tattooing safer and less painful. "They used to just jackhammer tattoos right in," Brong said.

Finer needles are used today, and tattoos are being applied with less pressure and depth. The bruising of the skin has been reduced which aids in healing and lessens the chance of infection, Brong explained. All materials used are mixed with disinfectant.

"You are definitely not the same after you get a tattoo," Brong said as he rapped away on the ankle. "It's real strange, I see a lot of kids come in here who are looking for something. I'll tattoo them and they'll go out of here like gangbusters. It seems to be a real ego boost for a lot of people."

Brong inked the tattoo a bright orange with a fountain pen-like device. He wiped off the excess ink with a cloth. "There you have it," he said. The fresh butterfly tattoo looked clean and crisp; not the bloody mess I expected. The whole procedure took about 10 minutes.

"I wonder what I'm going to think about this tattoo tomorrow," said the volunteer. Brong said, "You'll look at that and say, 'Gee, that wasn't so bad! They really are addicting. You'll be back to see me again in about a month. You'll say, 'Now, about that big rose I wanted'."

Sullivan discusses past, plans for rec. program

The 1980-81 school year saw the creation of the College's first Outdoor Program which progressed over the year and drew interest from all areas of the community.

The program idea came from Director of Student Activities Debbie Baker and Dean of Student Services Jim Roberts. When Baker was elevated from student activities counselor to her current position last year, they decided to split her former job in two: student programs specialist, filled by David Buckley, and outdoor program specialist, filled by Kelly Sullivan.

Ideas for the program were taken from those at Oregon State University and University of Oregon. "U of O's program is probably the best in the United States," said Sullivan.

"The trips are set up as outdoor experiences," said Sullivan. "There are no guides and anyone can go."

A brochure rack is set up in the Community Center containing brochures on hiking, biking, rafting, etc. "We've gone through way over 500 pieces of material this year. People take stuff," Sullivan said.

Fall term, Sullivan arranged nine day trips including biking, day hikes and an educational mushroom exhibition.

Wednesday, June 3, 1981

By winter, a ski bus costing \$20 a person per trip for skis, transportation and food was set up, but after the first trip, the bus idea went down due to low levels of snow. A problem confronting the program winter term was, "people weren't ready to go out in the cold," said Sullivan. Instead of outdoor activities, he paid \$40 to join a ski film club. Attendance at these films grew through the season an average from 10 to 50 people.

Along with the films, Sullivan brought in several guest speakers, including backpackers, Scott Shuey, who presented slides of the Pacific Northwest Trail which drew about 45 people, and Jim Bridwell, who lectured on climbing the major mountains of the world, attracting about 50 people.

A parachutist lectured on campus drawing 30 spectators. Steve Johnson, who spoke on outdoor survival, and a speaker from Outward Bound, who did a presentation on the program, drew 25-30 people.

Spring term brought the return of Shuey who presented slides from the Continental Divide, a 2,600-mile trek from Mexico to Canada. Shuey also led a day hike along the Columbia Gorge.

Seven trips have been

scheduled for the summer, including three river rafting trips, two hikes, a camping trip and a climb up Mt. Hood. Dates on these trips area available on the outdoor recreation brochure rack located in the Community Center.

A meeting will be held on Wednesdays one and a half weeks before each trip at 7:30 p.m. in either CC 101 or CC 117 to discuss where and when to meet for the trips, and maps will be available through Sullivan.

"The trips are set up without guides so people can choose to participate and withdraw from certain activities on a trip," said Sullivan. "Last year the program operated on a \$400 budget," he said, and so far, "everything's been free for the people."

Next year, Sullivan hopes, "We'll have our own room for displays, maps and picture boards. We'll have more of a students' room where students will run it."

Anyone intereted in getting a group together or becoming involved in the summer programs is encouraged to contact Sullivan in the Student Activities office, or see the brochure rack in the Community Center.

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