

Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers Newsletter

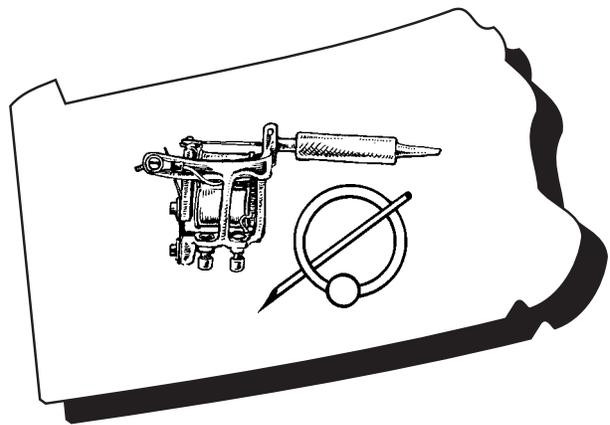
In
Unity
There
Is
Strength!

December 1997 - January 1998
Volume 1, Issue 5-6

I N S I D E !

- Man Arrested for Tattooing a Minor in Western PA•
- NYC 'Recommended' Tattoo/Piercing Guidelines•
 - Brand New Classified Section•
 - Horror Stories from Oregon•
- Professional Membership Application•

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Coalition Hotline:

412•531•5319

<http://www.pa-tattoo.com>

Editor's Notes

Happy New Year! Yes, I decided to cheat a bit and combine issues! Hey, it's the new year and I thought this was the best way for me to get back on track. So I beefed up this newsletter and called it Issue 5-6.

First and foremost, I've included a membership application in this issue. We've had a number of people officially join the Coalition since the last meeting which is great! The more people that are involved in this organization, the stronger and more representative it will be. Besides, the more members we have, the less we'll have to pass the hat at meetings!

By now the Pennsylvania State Legislature is back in session after an extended Holiday break. House Bill 332 (and its proposed amendment) and Senate Bill 847 are two year bills, so both will be active through the end of 1998. As of the printing of this newsletter, both bills were still sitting in their respective committees. We've also heard rumors of other legislative issues that may be introduced this year. Couple that with the soon-to-be-released National Environmental Health's Body Art Code, (and who knows what other surprises) and you can see we've got plenty of issues regarding our profession to monitor.

Even during the bustling holiday season, there was plenty of activity. We've received a copy of the NYC Department of Health's "Recommendations for Tattooing Practices," (Thanks to Bob Stern) which Philadelphia is now taking a look at in their quest to create some sort of guidelines. The operative word here is "recommendations," which has a much softer tone than REGULATIONS, LEGISLATION, LICENSE, etc. It's a monster manual that we can review at the next meeting.

Closer to home (Greensburg, PA), a man was arrested for tattooing a 15-year-old girl. He was charged with corruption of a minor and with tattooing a person under the age of 18 without parental consent. It should be noted that this person was working out of his home and not in an established shop. This incident was covered in most of the major papers in the Western Pennsylvania area.

I only know what I've read in the papers (see reprint at right)- and I haven't heard both sides, but I'll take my chances and form an opinion. Anyone who KNOWINGLY tattoos a minor should be prosecuted - he's not doing that 15-year-old, himself or our art any favors! This is something for the general public and legislators to point at and say, "See, we need rules and regulations to prevent this kind of thing from happening." But WAIT, tattooing of minors without parental consent is already covered under the State's criminal code! And can you believe someone had the audacity to ignore the law!

To me this proves two very important points that I've been trying to make to legislators for months now! 1.) All the laws and regulations in the world won't prevent someone from blatantly ignoring them. Even if State licensing was in place, do you think this guy would have gone out and applied? Do you think he would follow Health Department Guidelines for sterilization? Do you think he would have paid all the fees and had his home inspected? I can't tell you if this person was using single service materials and an autoclave to sterilize his equipment (nothing short of terrifying if he wasn't), but I can tell you that laws or no laws, license or no license, this guy would have been working out of his home! 2.) The legislators' big push has been that their regulations would protect minors and eliminate "scratchers," giving them leverage to close down people working out of their homes. Well, haven't they accomplished that with the existing laws?!?!

As much as I hate to see incidents like this take place, I think it speaks volumes about the current legislative situation in Pennsylvania - the existing laws work, more laws wouldn't necessarily help, and those of us who care about this art will always (laws or no laws) abide by high standards for our client's safety and well being, along with our own! (*Thanks to Duke Miller for collecting the newspaper articles on this incident!*)

-Tim Azinger

From the Tribune Review...

"Penn Township man faces criminal charges for tattooing minor"

A Penn Township tattooist is facing criminal charges for plying his art on a 15-year-old girl.

Jeffrey Wayne Heasley, 33, of Greensburg RD9, was arrested Thursday after Penn Township police officers and Westmoreland County detectives served a search warrant on his residence on Old Route 66.

Heasley allegedly applied a tattoo - three inches in diameter - portraying the sun on the girl's right outer thigh.

He was charged with corruption of minors and with tattooing a person under the age of 18 without parental consent.

Penn Township Detective Sgt. Anthony Pecora and county Detective Terry Kuhns served the search warrant and arrested Heasley without incident. Heasley ran the operation out of his home, Pecora said.

Pecora said a variety of tattooing equipment was seized, although no business records were found.

The joint investigation was launched after the girl's parents complained to the Penn Township Police Department.

Quick Notes

- Bob Stern recently met with the newly appointed Senator for his area who is against excessive legislation and feels that there is no need for SB 847! He also mentioned that Representative Krebs, the sponsor of HB 332, was just married and will most likely NOT seek another term!

- Thanks to Drake Cox, your classified ad will run not only in the newsletter, but also on the Coalition Web Site.

- Our next Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 22, at 1pm. Remember that if the weather is questionable, call the hotline the morning of the meeting to check for a cancellation. Don't take any chances - we'll mail you the material.

- For all you speed-demons, watch yourself on the PA Turnpike, two coalition members got zapped coming to the last meeting!

Wise Words From Dr. Kris Sperry

In the past year, it has become obvious that the legislative steamroller around the country is not going to let up. More and more cities, counties, and states are adding legislation to tattooing, or changing already existing legislation. In most cases that I am aware of, the proposed laws are more strict than those that already exist in a given location. I think that this reflects the continuing boom in tattooing as an art, and as this art form enters more and more into the mainstream of American culture, it is inevitable that attention is drawn to it, both negative and positive. Much of the legislative activities are geared at licensing and regulating both the operation of the business of tattooing, and the health and safety aspects.

Unfortunately, some of the proposed requirements to supposedly improve health and safety actually do nothing to address this issue, and are actually punitive, penalizing the tattoo artist unfairly. Perhaps the most blatant abuse that I have seen with respect to proposed requirements that the tattoo artist must meet is that of testing for infectious diseases. Despite the immense popularity of tattooing many doctors, nurses, and public health officials still consider it to be "dirty!," practiced only by those who are on the lower fringes of society. Because of this, the tattoo artist is somehow considered to be a "risk" for the transmission of infectious diseases. Thus, I am hearing over and over again that new or updated licensing regulations will require the tattoo artist to undergo Hepatitis B testing, tuberculosis testing, and even testing for AIDS. In some places, these tests would have to be performed annually, to coincide with license renewal. Obviously, if any of the blood testing disclosed evidence of illness (such as prior hepatitis, or being positive for HIV), the license renewal would be denied.

The response from the tattoo community has been mixed, as far as I can tell. Some are violently opposed to such mandated testing. Some have decided to move to other areas, rather than fight the issue. I find that these laws are fundamental violations of the rights we share as Americans. First, such mandatory testing is not required for physicians, nurses, dentists, chiropractors, or other health care workers who directly come in contact with other humans everyday,

and who are at risk for accidental exposure to infectious diseases merely by their occupation. In light of this, why should tattoo artists be unfairly singled out? Second, if a tattoo artist is working cleanly, using autoclave sterilization methods and practicing the Universal Precautions, there is absolutely no risk of disease transmission from one client to another, much less from the artist to a client. This supposed "risk" is nonexistent.

There are many aspects of licensing and regulation for tattoo artists that are reasonable and realistic. However, as far as I am concerned, requiring mandatory blood testing for infectious diseases is not one of them. Unless there is opposition voiced to such proposed laws, they will be passed, and then the tattoo artists will have to undergo needless and pointless testing that is frankly discriminatory, and is actually not legal to require of anyone else, even professionals who work with high-risk, patients every day!

If you or any artist you know is being subjected to these laws, and you want my help, please let me know, and I will do my best to help. If anyone has any questions they would like me to address, please, feel free to write to me at the following address. I have included my fax number and e-mail address, as well.

Kris Sperry, M.D.
5797 Trotters Court
Stone Mountain, GA 30087
fax 770 938 9644
e-mail: stiffdoc@bellsouth.net

Reprinted from *The Medical Hour With Dr. Kris Sperry*, National Tattoo Association Volume 97-98, Issue 2, with permission from National Tattoo Association and Dr. Kris Sperry.

Editors Note: Thanks to Bob Stern for bringing this article to my attention! It's ironic that we spent time at our last meeting discussing these same issues. Along with his permission to reprint this article, Dr. Sperry also offered his assistance if needed here in Pennsylvania. Someone of his stature and knowledge would be invaluable at a legislative public hearing, especially in light of the loads of misinformation that were presented at the public hearing for House Bill 332. Special thanks to Flo (NTA) and Dr. Sperry for there help.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OF REVERSE SIDE!



Why Get Involved ?



(Or, My Own Private Hell In Oregon!)

This is a true story. Whenever someone tells me that they don't have the know how or that they don't have the time to get involved or to even show up at meetings, I tell them this story.

I opened a shop in Oregon, in early 1993. At that time, there were no laws governing tattooing in Oregon. In November of 1993, the state introduced new tattooing laws that mandated licensing, inspections and codes that included everything down to the amount of water pressure at the faucet.

As part of this legislation, shops that the State had listings for (and the list was very short) were grandfathered in with a closing date of February 3, 1994.

The grandfathering period ended in February. During the first week of March, I received a letter from the State informing me of the new laws - 4 weeks past the deadline for me to apply for automatic licensure as an existing establishment.

I made a few calls to the licensing facility and came to the understanding that because of the late notification and documentation of my existing business, that the State would work with me to grant my license.

Several weeks after this conversation, in the middle of the afternoon, my shop was literally raided by State executives and the police. I was arrested, handcuffed and made to watch as they tore my shop apart looking for documents linking me to tattooing without a license. (When we went to court, they admitted over 200 pieces of documented materials!) Subsequently, I was taken to jail.

I was ordered to stand trial within 10 days and as a result, I

was fined \$1000.00 per day for 15 days. I had been in touch with the State daily since my arrest and was getting nowhere. I was told that since I hadn't registered with the State (even though I had never been informed of the new laws) that I was at fault and therefore not eligible for automatic licensure. I was then told that the State would only test for licensing twice a year and that the first test was scheduled for the following September. According to the State, the test hadn't been developed yet!

At this point, I started making daily trips to Salem come to some sort of resolution. After several trips to Salem, lots of arguments and hours of sitting in the waiting room, I finally, snapped. After a final confrontation at the front desk, I called the local newspaper and told them there was about to be some action at the Licensing Office. I thought they might want someone there to see it. (I'm sure that I sounded like a complete nut!)

When the reporter got there, I went back into the office, sat down in the middle of the floor and proceeded to shout at the top of my lungs, about anything and everything that had to do with my situation. Finally, the licensing police (oh, yes. They have their own little task force) carried me to the office of the head of the department. Finally!

After all of the hassles, my arrest, all of the time and money wasted (the sum was excessive) the State decided that if I could find a newly licensed Tattoo Artist Trainer to approve me under the States apprenticeship criteria they would test me. (I guess that they just found a test lying around somewhere!) I did find someone to sign me off and I did take the

State's test (somewhere around 300 questions on various subjects) and I finally received my license.

This entire ordeal took weeks, weeks that I was closed for business, losing valuable customers, spending lots of money, etc. This is why I got involved with the Coalition. This is why I will do anything that I have to do to make sure that it doesn't happen again - to me or anyone else. Why should you get involved? Why should you show up at MEETINGS? **BECAUSE IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU!**

-Drake Cox (Once Upon A Tattoo)

COALITION CLASSIFIEDS

Welcome to the Coalition Classifieds!

Ads may be purchased under the following guidelines: Price is \$10 for one (1) issue, \$20 for three (3) issues. Ad size is one (1) column inch which translates to five (5) lines of typeset characters. The Editor reserves the right to edit copy to conform to space constraints. All ad copy should be typed or printed and should be mailed along with payment

(check or money order payable to **Pennsylvania Coalition**) to:

Pennsylvania Coalition, PO Box 502, Carnegie, PA 15106. Please indicate the number of insertions and include your phone number. Please call for pricing on larger ads. 412-531-5319

FOR SALE: One (1) Electric Ritter Dentist Chair. Contour style, black pleather upholstery. Good Condition. \$400. Call Drake @ 814-726-2860

FOR SALE: One (1) Thermo Fax Stencil Maker. Good Condition. \$300. Call Drake @ 814-726-2860
