

A Dickens of a festival

In Holly's famous, or should that be infamous, Battle Alley, ghosts that wandered the pages of "A Christmas Carol" come alive, joining in the mirth and merriment of the city's Dickens Festival. Find out about this jocularly on Page 6D.

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Chris Page (at left) of Eternal Tattoos in Livonia works on a tattoo of a panther on a branch with a full moon on the forearm of Russ Gerke of Farmington Hills. Among tattoo-wearer Dan Allen's collection is a multi-colored dragon, also on his forearm.

photos by JIM JAGDELO/self photographer

Works of 'art' . . . that are skin deep

By Joanne Sobczak
special writer

Perhaps you're the one at a loss to find that truly unique Christmas gift or birthday present. Or may be you would like to "pin" your heart forever on your beau for Valentine's Day.

Maybe all you want for Christmas is a tattoo or two. The House of Tattooing in Westland and Eternal Tattoos in Livonia can give you a tour of the old and the new in artistic designs beyond your imagination and befitting your taste and your skin.

Tattooing is fast becoming a fashion trend, and for the wearer, it's a permanent one.

An old world custom dating back

to Egypt and 1300 B.C., tattoos are associated with the stereotypical bikers, sailors and soldiers. Today, they are turning up on people from all walks of life.

"We get everybody," said Terry "Tramp" Welker, owner of Eternal Tattoos. "Police, firemen, machinists and some professionals like engineers."

Welker views himself as an artist who transfers his clients' "fantasy to flesh," a philosophy that can be found on the business cards and his T-shirt. Welker and his partner and manager Chris Page see as many as 60-70 customers a week at their studio.

ACCORDING TO Welker, about 40 percent of the customers are

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— Terry "Tramp" Welker
Eternal Tattoos

women who usually select more feminine drawings like flowers or unicorns. But times are changing and it's not unusual for a female client to request a larger piece.

"People come in here with their own designs now versus years ago when they would just pick something out," said the Brighton resident whose arms and side reflect several incidents in his life as well as his philosophy. He lists dragons, lions, eagles and an "unbelievable number" of Tasmanian devils as the most popular choices.

Being in the business for 14 years, Welker has the method down pat.

"First, I draw the design up

(which is approved by the customer), then I'll transfer it to their skin and work from my outline," he said while beginning to trace with a special pencil a sword on a client's arm from a sheet of paper. "I draw the outline using a (electrically powered) single needle. After I finish the outline, I do the shading and details, then I put in the color."

A 10-day healing process generally completes the job. Like a doctor, Welker send his clients home with a care/treatment plan that prevents infection and keeps the tattoo from scabbing which would ruin the design.

THE TRICK to obtaining a beautiful tattoo is in the daily application of Neosporin, an over-the-counter antibiotic cream, while protecting the body marking from excessive sun or chlorinated water.

Welker charges a minimum of \$20 for a small rose, heart or name. The tattoo artist advises against names because the tattoo is permanent and the relationship may not be.

The average tattoo costs about \$60-70 and takes about 15 minutes to apply, depending on size. Full back pieces take several one-hour sittings and can run in the hundreds of dollars, he said.

Marty Woodlan at the House of Tattooing (and it is a house) not only provides an assortment of patterns, but also does cosmetic tattooing.

Kathi Hann, a mother of four, was surprised by her husband's birthday present, a gift certificate for permanent eyelining. Hann had both top and bottom lash lines done with little pain and hardly any post-procedure irritation.

Woodlan charges \$125 for each

eye. In addition to eyelining, he also creates eyebrows, lip lines and beauty marks. His female clientele is 40-70 percent of his business. Beauty marks aside, the cosmetic procedures have benefitted many who by accident or birth have lived with flaws that made them self-conscious.

LIKE WELKER, Woodlan is a master at his art. He's been tattooing for 19 years and brags that even the health department representative who approved the premises returned to have a tattoo done.

The Westland resident and his two partners, Duane Fager and Charlie Dufresne, take care of from three to 15 people a day, six days a week. The customers include doctors, lawyers, nurses and musicians.

Some people make better candidates for tattoos than others. Women, for instance, take color better because their skin is softer. The skin of people with outdoor occupations tends to be tougher. And con-

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"Tramp" Welker of Eternal Tattoos works on a tattoo — a bracelet of flowers and a butterfly — on the ankle of Dawn Brobst of Livonia.

Ouch — How to undo a tattoo

By Joanne Sobczak
special writer

Viewers probably chuckled about the Sisko watch commercial that aired awhile back. In it, the actress announced that her husband, who had purchased the watch, was no longer around, but her Sisko still was.

Well, guys and gals, there's another romantic gesture that may even outlast a Sisko — a tattoo, particularly if it's your sweetheart's names.

That's why Terry "Tramp" Welker at Livonia's Eternal Tattoos prefers a customer not select a name for the skin engraving. A tattoo is permanent and one can never anticipate that the relationship will be the same.

One of his clients recalls having Welker tattoo a girlfriend's name on his body several years ago. When asked why he didn't advise otherwise, Welker said the client seemed quite sure about what he wanted.

"I knew I wanted the name, but it was my girlfriend who decided she didn't want me," the customer chuckled.

That's not unusual, according to Dr. Howard Weissman, who had a female patient who want-

'I knew I wanted the name, but it was my girlfriend who decided she didn't want me.'

ed the name John removed from her breast.

"She knows Bob now; she doesn't know John anymore," said Weissman. The patient had double trouble because it was a homemade tattoo.

Weissman and his partner, a physicist, while researching the use of an Argon laser for cosmetic hair removal, found it dissolved tattoos.

THE ELECTRIC needle commonly used by tattoo artists injects color at a consistent level beneath the skin's surface, making removal easier and with little scarring. But the needle depths of homemade tattoos, done by hand, are at various levels.

In short, his patient's tattoo could be removed by laser, but with excessive scarring. But it was worth the scar to the woman who was in a new relationship, according to Weissman.

A graduate of the College of Osteopathic Medicine in Des Moines, Iowa, Weissman specialized in nuclear medicine. For the past seven years, he has been using the Argon laser to destroy unwanted hair. Argon is an element, a greenish blue gas. The Argon laser beam recognizes every color but greenish blue which made it well suited for blood and dark colors.

"We were actually shooting for the blood vessel that nourishes the hair root as well as the hair itself," he said. While pursuing that method, the two men discovered a successful way of eliminating spider veins in the skin with similar good results.

Weissman admits using an Argon laser to remove tattoos isn't new; others have done it before him. But with the laser in his office, he was able to provide an additional service. He has removed about 150 tattoos.

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