

Tattoo shop owner wins fight

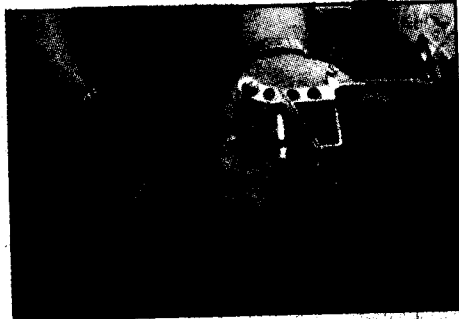
Man who waged lobbying effort will open business Dec. 15

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HOBBS NEWS-SUN

You might call it a tale of the tattooist who could.

When Dominic Sanchez's tattoo parlor, Fantazee Ink, opens Dec. 15 it will be the first such shop inside the city limits in 40 or 50 years. The store's opening will also mark the culmination of nearly five years of work for Sanchez in trying to get the City Commission to change the code governing tattoo parlors.

Monday night the commission approved a new ordinance that makes tattooing legal in



Hobbs.

Before Monday's City Commission meeting Hobbs prohibited tattooing, except for medical purposes, inside the city limits.

Sanchez first took his fight to change the city code to the commission about five years ago, but the commission just seemed to forget about the

issue.

He didn't get the change he asked for back then, but he doesn't hold much of a grudge.

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"I think they had a lot on their minds," Sanchez said.

In October Sanchez took his case to the City Commission again, and they agreed to discuss tattooing during a commission work session.

At that session, City Manager Bo Thomas told the commissioners he didn't know how long the ordinance had been on the books, but probably dated back to the late 1940s or early 1950s. Several commissioners said they didn't know Hobbs had an ordinance outlawing tattooing, and wondered why nobody changed it earlier.

Sanchez thinks maybe some people still have a 1950s picture of tattooing, saying that it's no longer just convicts and bikers who get tattoos.

"It's not really just that particular group," Sanchez said, pointing out that many doctors, lawyers and even police officers get tattoos today.

Sanchez also said he feels today's practices make tattooing safer than in the bad old days, as an example he points to disposable needles. The new ordinance requires tattooists

to use clean and sterile needles.

Sanchez said he would use disposable needles anyway, and use an autoclave. The bright shiny silver machine sits on one corner of his new business at 412 S. Grimes. The walls of his tattooing room are covered with racks of ink, and tattoo guns hang along the wall.

Sanchez said for many people the hardest part of getting a tattoo isn't the pain, which he compared to a bee sting, but deciding on placement. He also said he won't keep anything from someone seeking a bit of body artwork.

"I will tell them exactly where it's going to hurt the most," Sanchez said.

For him, the artistic aspect is what keeps him in the tattooing business.

"To me it's an art form," Sanchez said, "a living breathing canvas."

He also said most people pick a design, because "that piece really means something to them."

His favorite tattoo on the inside of his left arm depicts, of all things, a hand holding a tattoo gun.

Sanchez said he got his start in tattooing at an early age. He can't recall the exact age, but thinks he might have been 13 or 14. He remembers that friends would notice his drawings and a few of them asked him to make tattoos from them. Since then, he says he has developed into what he calls a tattoo professional, using one-use needles and sterilization equipment.

This isn't the first tattoo shop Sanchez has operated in the Hobbs area. His first shop, Otherworld Tattoo, sat directly across from the city limits. He said that business failed after he and his co-owner had a disagreement about where it should go.

Sanchez said he's happy with the way his dealings with City Hall worked out, although the one "no" vote at Monday's meeting came as a slight disappointment.

"I was kind of happy except Fonay told me 'no,' but five out of six isn't bad."

At the meeting Fonay said his vote had to do with concern that, because Hobbs has no zoning, someone could set up a tattooing business in their home.

Sanchez doesn't think that's

likely, and points out that getting into tattooing requires what he considers a heavy investment. In his view, if somebody puts out the money for needles, needle guns and an autoclave, they will probably go ahead and rent out a legitimate business location.

"It's not cheap to be a tattooist," Sanchez said.

Sanchez said that while he's happy to help somebody decide on a good design, he won't do any gang tattoos.

"But I'll cover them up with pleasure," Sanchez added.

The ordinance says tattooists can't work on anybody who's intoxicated. Sanchez said that's no problem for him. He doesn't care for drunks anyway.

"When people drink, they get obnoxious," Sanchez said.

He also said drunks often wake up the next day with a tattoo they didn't want and don't like, and they want to blame the tattooist. And, Sanchez said, that's one problem he doesn't want.

He also has some sage advice for people considering getting a tattoo.

"It's permanent; think about it before you do it," Sanchez said.