

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY DANIELLE BEHRLE



TATTOOS BY RICK®

Curly isn't the only legend in Green Bay

Not many people would believe that within a modest tattoo studio on Military Avenue works a man who changed laws in Wisconsin, became a permanent member of Willie Davidson's life and still has time for his wife and three sons. Tattoo artist Rick Harnowski has been a notable citizen of Green Bay for years.

"The only reason I got into tattooing is because I hung around with a tougher crowd back then," Rick says.

A walk into Tattoos by Rick® brings forward a sense of pride and history. The business was originally established on Walnut Street and was also located on Broadway until it moved to its current location in 1997. Framed photos cover the deep red walls of the current location; One photo, hidden under a wall-mounted fish tank, displays Willie Davidson shaking Harnowski's hand while showing off a fresh tattoo on his shoulder. Yes, Willie G. of the Harley-Davidson Motor Company.

"That's how he got into tattooing; he was a biker with artistic talents. Tattooing went naturally hand in hand and that's how he got involved. But he is heavily involved now (with Harley Davidson)," says Dan Harnowski, Rick's 25-year-old son.

— BACK FOR A SECOND SESSION, CUSTOMER ADRIELLA HAS RICK FINISH THE WINGS ON HER BACK. THEY WERE OUTLINED IN ONE SESSION AND WERE COLORED LAVENDER WITH WHITE TIPS ON THE SECOND VISIT. RICK CAN SPEND UP TO EIGHT HOURS IN ONE DAY ON A SINGLE TATTOO. HE NOTES THAT THE FULL-BODY ART AND PORTRAITS ARE THE MOST TIME-CONSUMING.

Rick has been around this area for many years, and his presence has left many marks on not only the tattoo and art world, but the political world as well. Back in the 1960s tattooing was not legalized, but many people experimented with the art and tattooed as a hobby.

In Milwaukee, Harnowski pushed the legislation far enough to allow tattooing to become legal with a license. After many denial letters (which he has framed in the archive room) legislators finally agreed to see him and his resolution was pushed through to allow the art.

With a quiet, Christopher Walken-like persona, ("I'm told that every day," Rick notes), Harnowski is one of the most noted tattoo artists in the country. He has been featured in nearly every tattoo magazine in the nation. The most prominent among them are *Skin & Ink* and *Tattoo*. *Skin & Ink* features tattooing legends monthly with a full-sized pull-out poster of either the artist or a piece of his or her work. Harnowski created a drawing just for the magazine featuring many predictions about the fate of the world.

"It's predictions of the world, about the Mayan calendar, Nostradamus predictions and all the disasters of the world. It was quite an honor, to have the chief editor ask me to do a drawing," Rick says.

When members of the Green Bay Packers need to get inked, it's common knowledge in the locker room that they all should go to Rick. "It's kinda neat because people come in and there's always a Packer hanging around. We always have a good three or four Packers on the waiting list to get in between the games," Harnowski says.

Aside from permanently marking Packers, one of the most well-known things about Tattoos by Rick® is the globally attended Rick's Tattoo Convention. The event has been happening off and on since 1982. The 13th convention is set for Jan. 15 to 18, 2009.

The tattooing community is very tight, and also very tight with the motorcycle community. Rick's relationship with Harley-Davidson Motor Company recently reached new levels with the groundbreaking of the company's future museum in Milwaukee.

"Harley-Davidson selected me to do the tattoo designs for the museum," Harnowski says. "They're going to be sold exclusively out of there. My designs will also be featured on clothing. The garments will have a hangtag of mine and the family's history."

Quite the history it is. No rush on heading to Tattoos by Rick® to get inked though; the tattoo artists are booked until the end of March and a consultation with down payment is required before scheduling. There are thousands of hand-drawn designs in the display room along with existing illustrations to choose from. With a consultation Rick or his sons Dan and Josh Harnowski can also design the right tattoo. 🎨

✦ **The studio at 834 S. Military Ave. in Green Bay is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays to Fridays; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. There are no walk-ins; appointments are required.**