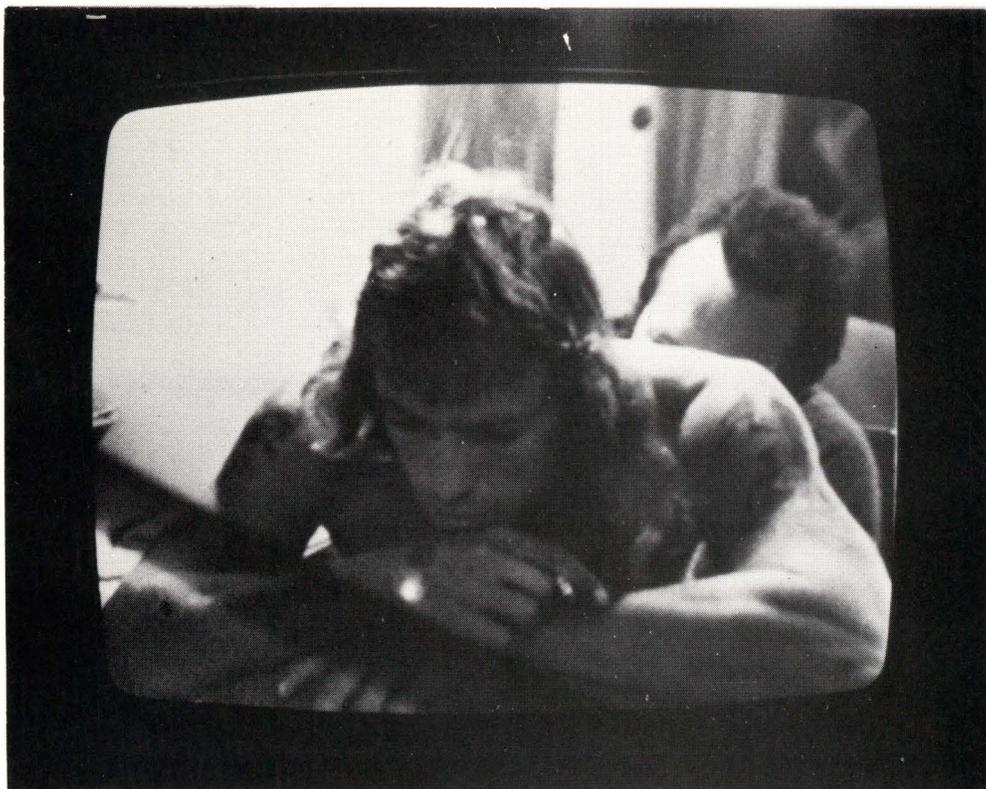


TATTOO TAPES



ANDREW DRUMMOND

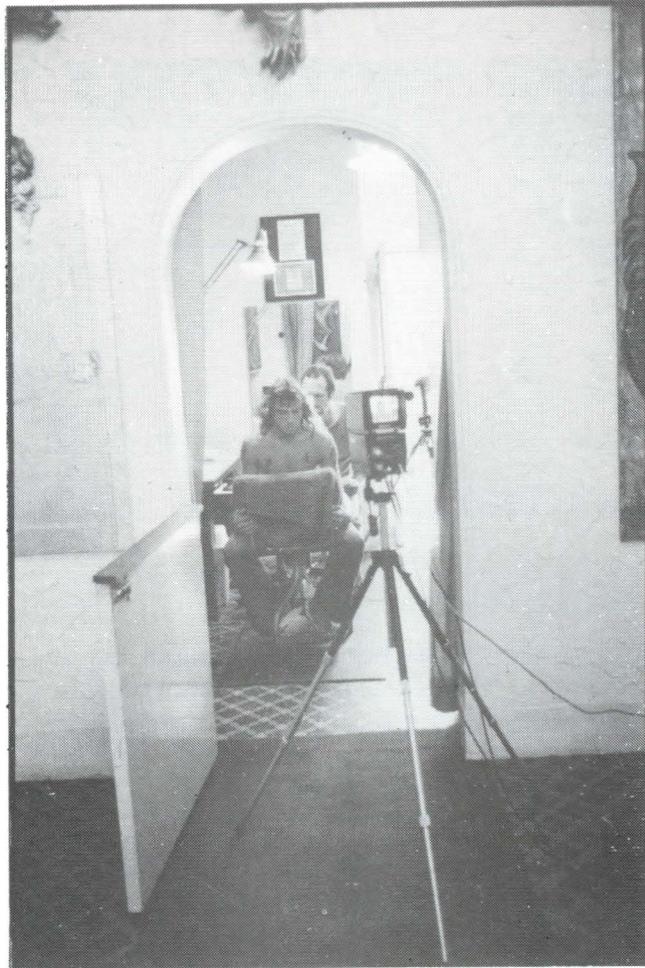


Tattoo: To make permanent marks or designs upon the skin by puncturing it and inserting a pigment or pigments: practised by various tribes of low civilization, and by individuals in civilized communities.

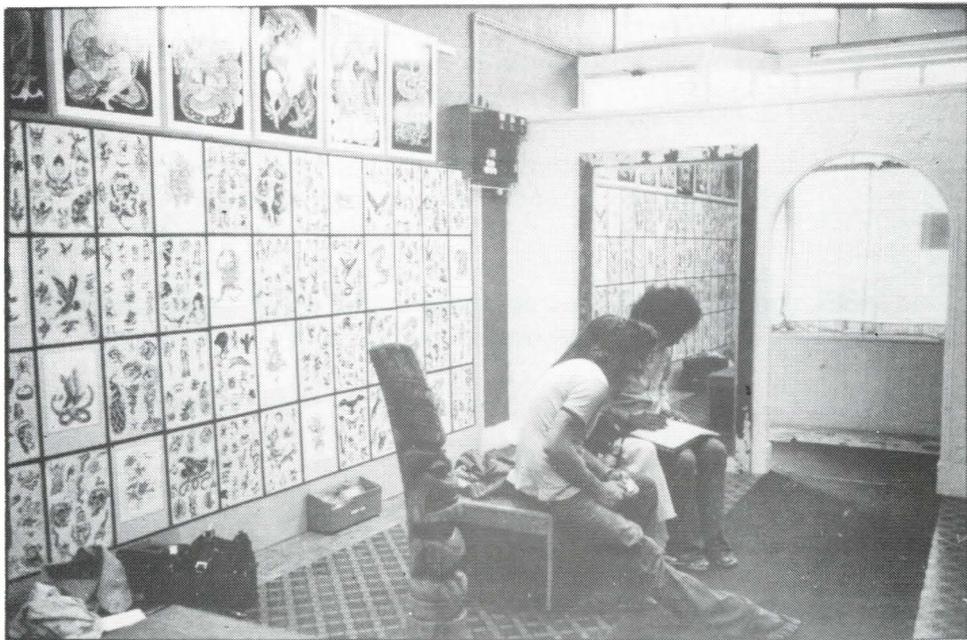
Shorter Oxford English Dictionary

19 JUN 1990

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View of the tattooing process.



Interior view of The Tattoo Shop.

Extracts from a conversation between Murry Hagen and Andrew Drummond made three weeks after the video tape session.

A. How are you Murray.

M. Fine, thanks.

A. Whereabouts were you born?

M. Wairoa, up the coast.

A. Tell me a little about your schooling, as far back as you can remember.

M. Like what schools did I go to, how long did I go there?

A. Yes. How long did you stay at high school for?

M. I sat S.C. and left after that.

A. Did you get, oh, it doesn't matter.

M. Yes, I got a couple of subjects. I went to the Sixth Form and went after a few jobs.

A. When you left high school did you leave home straightway?

M. No.

A. Whereabouts did you go?

M. I've been moving around the North Island most of the time for about 5 years.

A. Doing what?

M. Oh, jobs, driving a truck, and working for a construction company.

A. And, I notice like when you were getting that tattooed on your back, you got a lot more done. Tell me about when you got your first one, whereabouts was it.

M. Paul Simmon did my first one, in Palmerston and I was a bit scared about getting my first one, the guy before me went very pale and looked like he was going to faint, so I thought I had better get myself a small one, and see how much it was going to hurt. It was not as bad.

A. You recently told me about what you did when you got your first tattoo. Tell me about when you got your first tattoo.

A. About when you went to the pub and things like that.

M. Oh, yes I looked at my chest and saw the outline on

the first one. I thought it was too painful, so we went across the road to the Family and bought a bottle of whisky back and had a nice sit down and more or less polished it off while he was finishing off.

A. It made you feel better or made him feel better?

M. He was a good bloke. It was easier to take the pain.

A. When you got that flying elephant on your back, flying monster, I watched a tape afterwards and you did not seem to be showing much pain. Was it very painful?

M. It was very painful, close to the bone, my backbone shoulder blade and that was it.

A. When Roger started doing the actual outline was it painful then, tell me about the whole pain idea, you know, before you ..

M. It's sort of a burning feeling. Not that bad like someone running a hot knife down your back. That's as similar as I can get to it.

A. And, does it, after about 30 seconds go numb, and you don't feel any more?

M. Yes. When he starts on a new bit you can feel it, but after he's been over it a couple of times, it just goes numb, yes.

A. We started talking about tattoos but we didn't really talk about your family, and do you have any brothers and sisters?

M. Yes, I have three sisters and a brother.

A. And does your brother have tattoos?

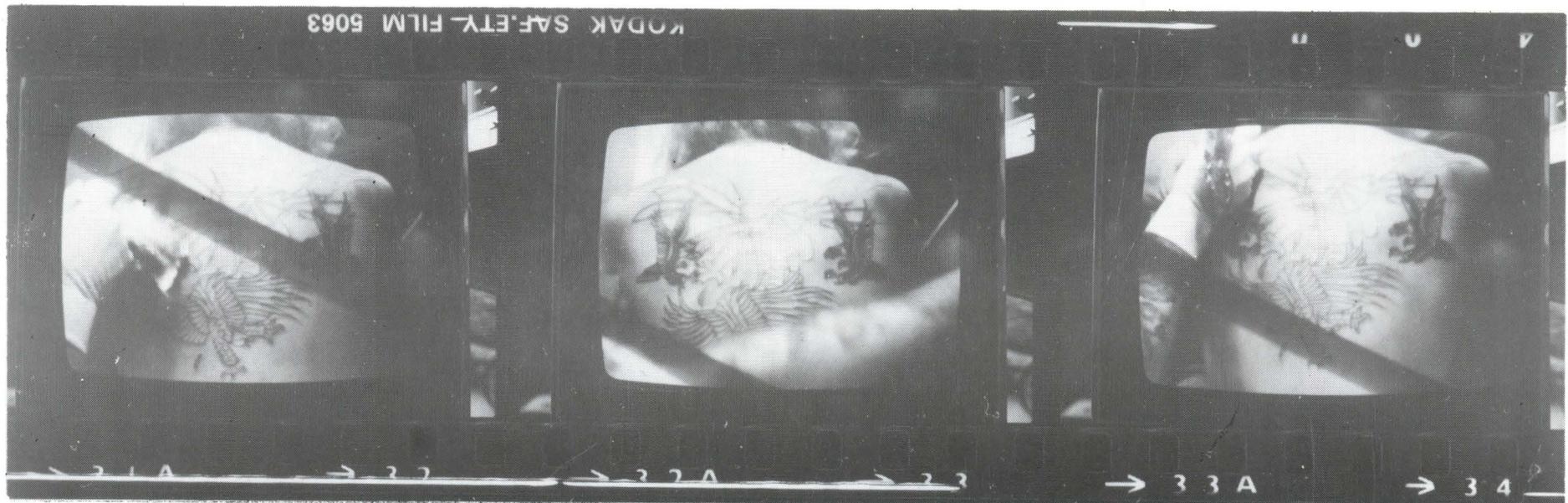
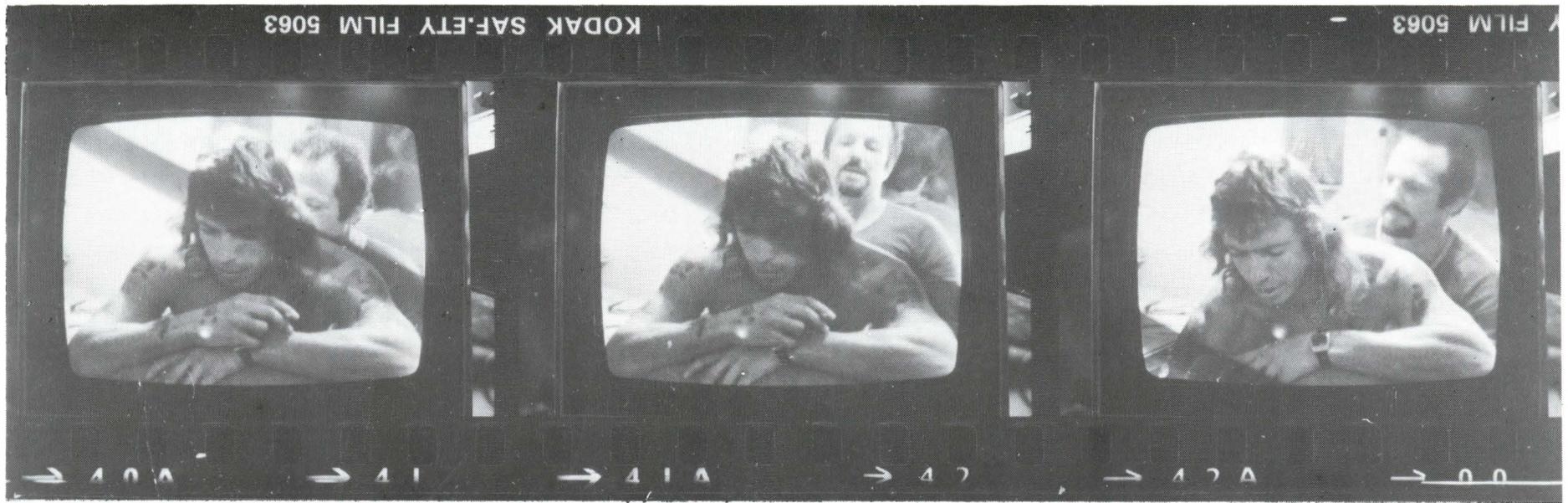
M. No, he's just the opposite to me. He's sort of collar and tie guy and doesn't believe in tattoos and things like that.

A. You have a very good relationship with him? Do you get on with him all right?

M. Oh, sometimes.

A. A sort of good brotherly relationship. Do your parents know you have tattoos, or do you feel that you should tell them.

M. Oh, no. It's my body.



Stills from Tattoo Tapes.

A. That's right. Your body.

M. My body.

A. When you first got them done, what were your parents words to you.

M. Nothing really. Just a bit of frown, and they weren't overly happy about it, they didn't come up and have a look and say that's neat or something.

A. The tattoo that you got done on your back, is really quite an interesting one because it is not based on the traditional tattoos, it's something you did yourself. Would you like to tell me something about where you found the images and how you decided it was going to be?

M. Well, its the cover of an Ossibisa album the flying elephant is, and I just liked the design and that's about all really.

A. And that's why you got it done. Maybe you should describe the album and what parts you selected off the cover, that you can have done.

M. The flying elephant and a lizard and some other thing my bob I don't know what they are.

A. Creatures

M. Yes, creatures and I finished off the bottom of it with scrub and trees and lizard and things like that, just to finish it off.

A. Do many of your. Let's change the subject a wee bit here. Do many of your friends have tattoos?

M. Well, one of my flatmates does. He's very keen on tattoos. He gets them quite often. Another of my flatmates he's not got any at all and he's not going to get in. His main reason for it is because it identifies you with the police or something. Something like that.

A. Yes.

M. They write all these tattoos down and you have a sure means

of identifying you, I suppose.

A. That sort of aspect does not worry you at all.

M. No. I'm a good honest kiwi.

A. I note that some of the images that you have on your back you have flying monster and a couple of eagles that were already there, and you've combined them into the story. Have you thought of extending like the eagles being attacked by the monster into the rest of the picture?

M. Like I see it, it was a pity I got them on because they interferred with a larger picture that I wanted.

A. A whole picture.

M. Yes quite a few sittings, instead of just one of a few things, which if you got those its going to bugger up the rest - a big picture.

A. Its quite interesting. Recently its just happened you can look at other things around us to, like the hot rodders putting air brush pictures on their cars. Like the way of saying, this is my car.

If you go to the beach and go for a swim and walk down the beach, do you feel conscious that people are looking at you?

M. Well, yes, people would be coming up and having a look. We were down at Oriental Bay the other day and this kid was saying "Look Mum at the pictures on that man" and he was keen on getting some himself. His old lady was explaining to him how they got put on, and she explained them away like that you know.

A. Did you go over and say anything to her.

M. No. I just laughed at her, and this lad.



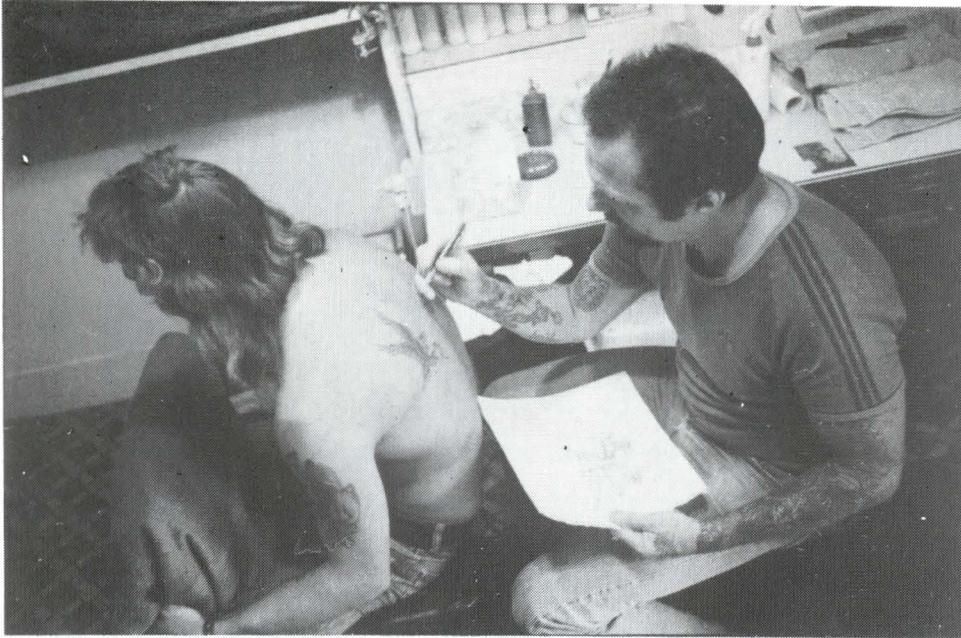
Stills from Tattoo Tapes.

An explanation of modern tattooing techniques given by Roger Ingerton.

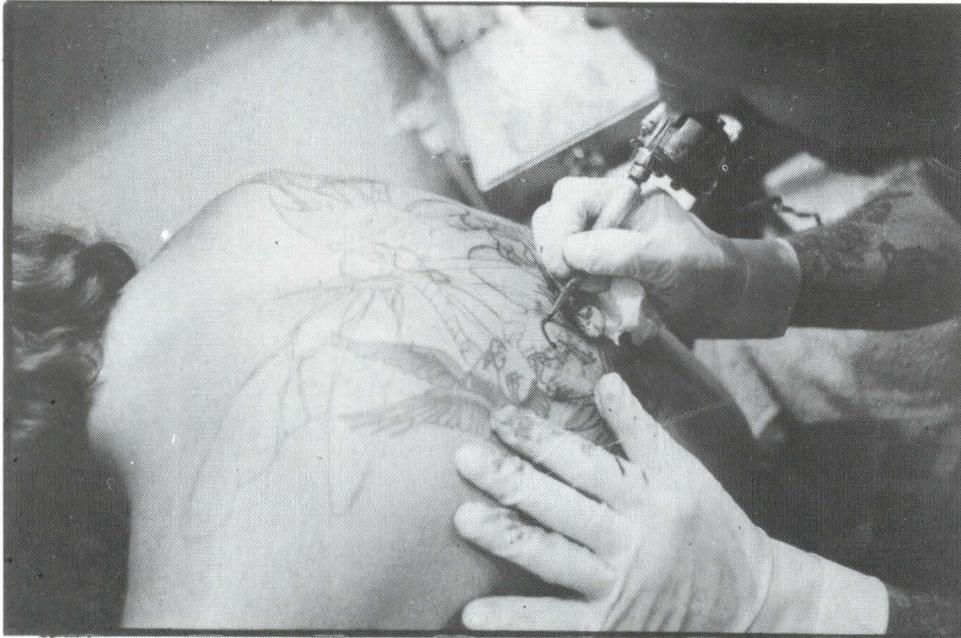
- A. Roger if you like to explain a little bit about the technique that you used on Murray's back. To explain the tattooing. How you start the tattooing and the whole process.
- R. Well Murray already had two tattoos, so I incorporated those and then almost freehand tattoo, most of it is freehand, I just filled in with what was already there, a design of his choice.
- A. Normally you don't, normally you use your own designs. In this case it was his design. That didn't bother you too much.
- R. Oh no. Well most of it was my interpretation of it. I get people who bring in their own designs. They see them in books, magazines things they see in different places. And I still have to adapt it to a suitable design which is suitable for tattooing. Separation, dark and light areas
- A. Right, a sort of line drawing technique. Once you put the line on the back, or in this case on the back, tattooing proper starts, just explain a little about the actual machinery that you use for tattooing.
- R. Well the machines I use, quite a few make them a lot of tattooists make their own. The ones I use are made by the incredible Billy Ferness, who is a tattooist from about 1920s and he made them for me about 10 years ago and I've always used the same machines. They are very simple machines, a bit like a bellbuzzer arrangement, spring over the bar that vibrates up and down, the needles. For the outline I use four very fine needles and I join them together in a sort of perfect square. A four needle outline that's the outline you see on Murray's back is done with four very fine needles they actually puncture the skin which needs a certain amount of personal attention while you are actually working. I use the little finger to raise

them or adjust them. The tips just penetrate the skin, don't actually go in, and as they draw out they leave sort of pigments behind.

- A. I guess because they go in, the idea of adjusting the the little finger is to stop ripping.
- R. Yes. You can go too slow or too fast and you make little adjustments, the machine becomes an extension of your hand really. Quite a bit like drawing, it's difficult sometimes. A bit like a floor polisher, the machines got a mind of its own sometimes.
- A. Right.
- R. It seems to wander a bit.
- A. Once the outlines done which is the most painful part, then you get into the covering, the shading.
- R. I've got two... Well, I've settled on the use of three types of machines. I have used many hundreds of different combinations, flat shaders, square shaders, round, machines with 15 needles in, 20 needles and 7 needles. Well after many years I've settled on a combination of three machines. Most of the effects that I want to get, airbrush shading, round shading, colouring shading, so for Murray's shading I used 8 needles, have you seen the ..
- A. Yes I saw it.
- R. You can get quite a few shadings with that.
- A. Yes, you can get a very feathered look. Gives quite dense colour.
- R. You do that by actually controlling the depth of the needles, and the motion. You fleck outwards away from the cell point, do a circular drawing motion for the depth of colour.
- Or you do bands, vertical, horizontal bands,
- A. Right so we've got that. We've talked about the machine you use and the guy who made them, and the types of different machines and the difficulty of handling it.



Initial drawing of the image onto the skin using a biro.



View of tattooing process.

The other thing that comes to my mind when I watch it being done is the hygienic thing. It does not hang me up at all, but I see you putting on rubber gloves and things.

R. Yes. We keep it pretty simple just to avoid transferring anything from one person to another.

A. Yes.

R. And that involves all colour capsules, spatulas that sort of thing. They are all changed after each person. Needles are sterilised in a boiler and this is important. Use the gloves once and throw them away. This is very simple but it is necessary for this particular art.

A. You've been obviously been tattooing a long time because the results you get, very slick in terms of the way you draw, and the results you get are pretty clean and sophisticated. How many years have you been tattooing?

R. I think full time close on 10 years. Before that I did part time I helped out. I did hand tattooing. Years ago I was hand tattooing in Adelaide and I had difficulty making it.

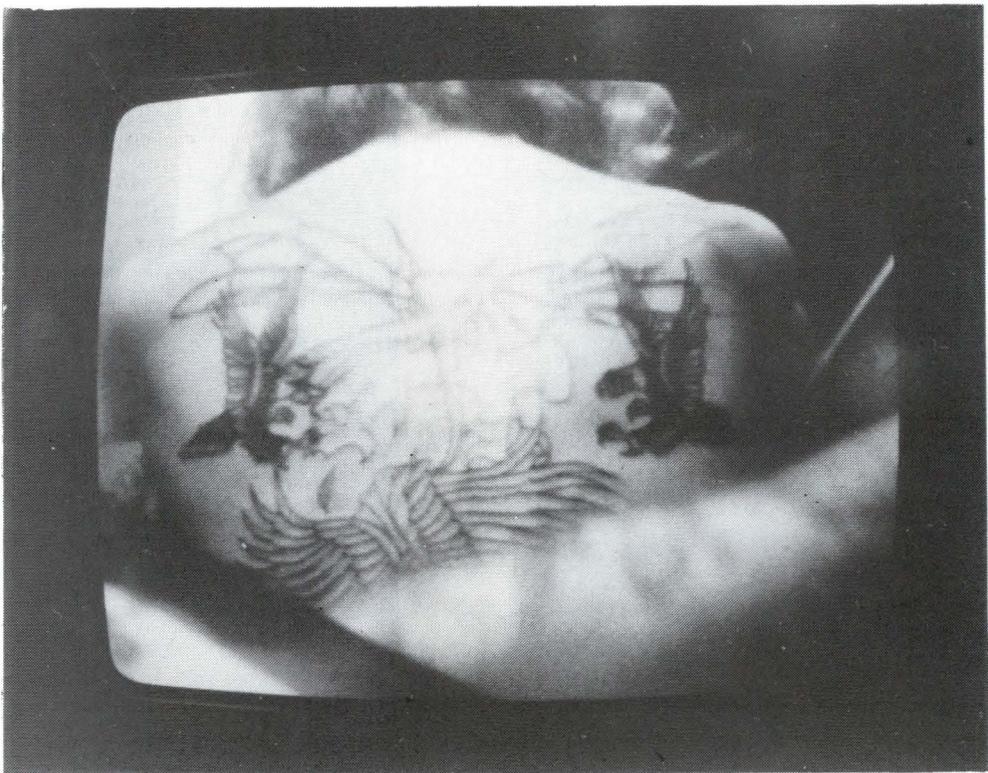
A. Who gave you your first tattoo?

R. The first I did on myself and I just carried on.

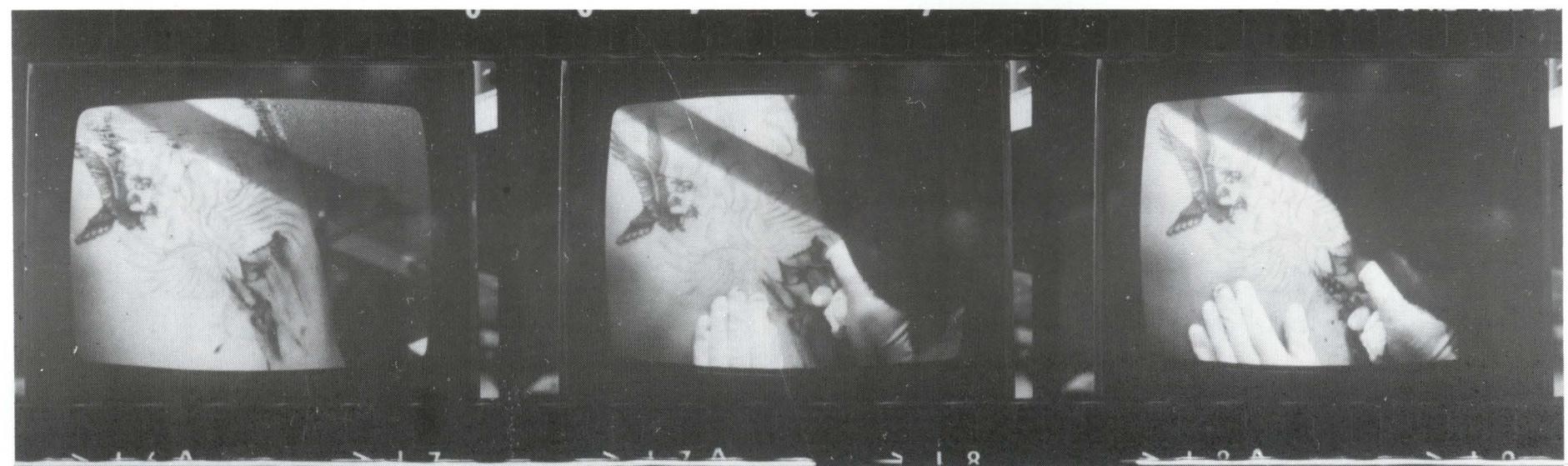
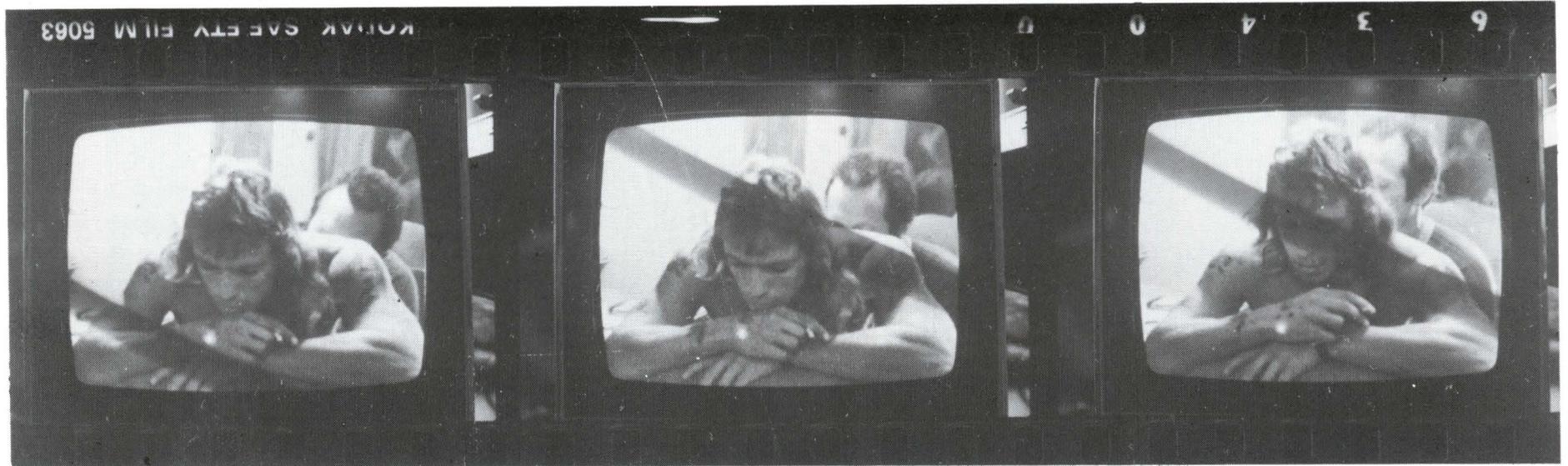
A. So today we are sitting up here and there are lots of people waiting, its a pretty demanding sort of business you're doing. You seem to be busy all the time.

R. Yes. Lots of customers.

A. Well thank you very much for all the help.



Stills from Tattoo Tapes.



Stills from Tattoo Tapes.

A short synopsis of tattooing from an ethnological point of view.

Tattoo is a world wide phenomena. The word comes from the Tahitian word tatau. The most common meaning for tattoo is the marking of a permanent pattern on the skin by puncturing and inserting coloured material. The term is sometimes used to include scarification as practised by Africans and Australians. These peoples have a dark skin which would not show dark lines. They therefore cut the skin and rub in materials to form scars.

Though sometimes described as simply decorative there is reason to believe that tattoo marks were originally for identification though the ethnological evidence is not conclusive. It is difficult to separate utility from ornament. In Polynesia and New Zealand tattoo was not only a mark of beauty but of rank or status in the society. People of rank had the status to command wealth which enabled them to pay for the services of a highly skilled craftsman-priest. The patterns were not specific to a tribe but to the individual. The basic design however, was constant with some differences from area to area. In North America, where tattoo by puncture was practised, marks often denote tribal application. Among some South American tribes tattooing was a "rite of passage" from childhood to adulthood.

Scarification patterns in Africa generally showed tribal affiliation while in Australia certain scars often marked admission to the ranks of elders.

The Classical world of Europe associated tattoo with barbarism and in civilized society it was not practised. After the explorations of the eighteenth and nineteenth century sailors introduced the practice from countries such as Tahiti and Japan, tattooing therefore associated with the "lower classes".

High status people in a society distinguish themselves from others by wearing clothes or ornaments which to outsiders may seem barbaric or outlandish. By fulfilling the standards of beauty and merit of their society such people show their status and reinforce the beliefs of their society by conforming to its laws of what is "correct".

Tattoo had, and still has, such a function today.

Written by Mrs B. McFadgen,
Ethnologist,
National Museum.



Finished outline of the tattoo.

I would like to thank all contributors for their time and effort involved in the production of the video tapes and this publication.

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The video tapes were made at the Tattoo Shop, 198 Cuba Street, Wellington. Phone 845-242.

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Produced by Andrew Drummond c 1978.

