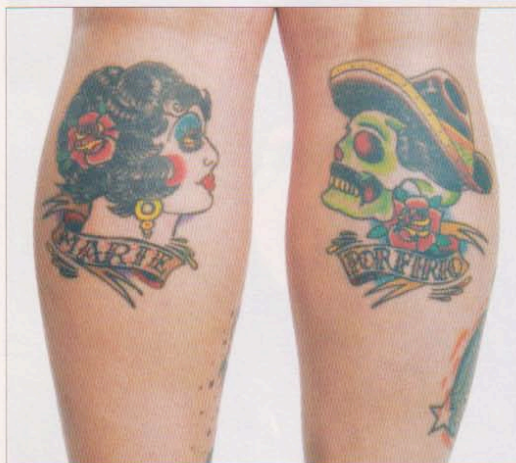


Tat tales

We ask Chicagoans of all stripes: "What's the story behind your ink?"
By **Cecilia Wong** Photographs by **Martha Williams**



Danielle Ramirez, 23

"The back of my calves are renditions of my parents. The one about my father is really fitting—sometimes he's the death of me, but at the same time, I love him to death. The one about my mom, well, she's extremely beautiful and she's always been into gardening, so [the flower in the hair] makes sense that way."



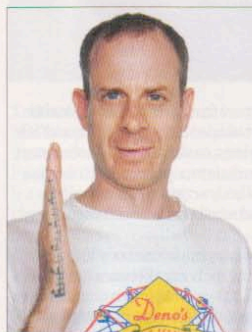
Andrea Jablonski, 34

"These are exact replicas of my father's tattoos, for Father's Day. They're the exact same style and place where he has them. He had his done in the Polish navy—it's an iron cross, a skull and crossbones, and an old diver's mask. I'm in two bands, so people assume that they're band tattoos. If not that, they then ask if they're skinhead tattoos, and I'm like, 'No! Please!'"



Melanie Wojtychiw, 18

"I wanted to get this tattoo as soon as I saw this design. It's half of the Ukrainian headpiece we wear, combined with the Ukrainian symbol for freedom. I'm a Ukrainian folk dancer, so it means a lot to me."



Lloyd Natof, 41

"I'm a woodworker; I build furniture. I wanted [my ruler tattoo] to be exposed and decorative, but also functional. And I really do use it probably every day, for quick cross-measurements. It's pretty accurate—within a 16th of an inch. It's part of this larger, old-fashioned notion about being marked by what we do."



Jeremiah Catalano-Reilly, 22

"I got stabbed 12 times trying to break up a fight at a party in December 2004. I was never a big tattoo guy before this, but I wanted something to remind me that it happened, and that I came out of it okay. I'm not a firebrand or anything, but I am religious, and that particular scripture [Jeremiah 29:11] talks about hope for the future."



Jesse de la Pena, 36

Left, "Music is my life—I deejay, I produce, I do band stuff. It all revolves around music... but I also didn't want to get headphones or a record or a needle, because everybody's got those. The pitch control is something I'm always adjusting, tuning up and down, blending music together."



John Niles, 26

Right, "My father put in 40 years with US Steel and my mom put in 40 years with EJ&E Railway. To me it's my family crest. It represents Indiana and everything that means—toil, strife, doing whatever it takes to make it."



Adam Rush, 34

Left, "The design is from the back of my academy shirt. After my first major fire at 37th and Ashland, I decided to get it. I've been on the Chicago Fire Department for 10 years now, and it's been a big part of my life."



Koren Grieveson, 34

Right, "I was butchering a lot of pigs at the time, when we first opened [Avec, where Grieveson is chef de cuisine]. I love swine, and I love bacon, and pigs eat corn. I'm a tattoo person, and I don't do things on a whim. You won't see the Tasmanian Devil on my arm or a rainbow on my ankle."

For more ink-inspired stories, go to timeout.com/chicago.