

Skin & Steel ~ Tattoo & Motorcycle Show



click title above to
visit photo gallery

The 4th annual Skin & Steel Show was held on January 18, 2014 at American Legion Post 2 in Tempe [2125 S Industrial Park Avenue] from 10a-4pm. It was a gorgeous day to be out ~ sunny & 70's. And a lot of people had this event on their to-do list.

We arrived to a packed parking lot. The outdoor vendor area had about 30 booths set up, including Law Tigers and HogWear | Purple Slice. You could find jewelry, apparel, parts & accessories, onsite metal etching ~ metal 'tattoo', and more; including Buggie-Bags ~ a clever cover for motorcycles & other toys.

Our friend Skeeter had a pre-registration booth for the 5th Annual National Armed Forces Freedom Ride, coming up May 17. Event mascot 'Aurora', a majestic American Bald Eagle, was there with handler Joe Miller from Liberty Wildlife.

The indoor vendors included event sponsor ABATE of AZ, with a membership & merchandise booth. State President MaryK was among the reps on hand.

This is also where the tattoo booths were stationed. This year there were three. The 2014 featured artist was Big Mike 33 from Ink Fever Tattoo in Riverside CA; who has attended this show since year 1. The west side of the Valley was represented by Wolfskin Ink Studio [18028 N.19th Way, Phx]. Jubal from Wolfskin also created this year's tee-shirt art. The east side was represented by Skin Deep Studios, a newly opened shop located in Apache Junction between Ironwood & Ocotillo.

The band 'Rewired' was set up outdoors and they were rocking the place! They are out of Flagstaff and came down to donate their time to the cause. Outstanding, guys! Find them on FB at /RewiredClassicRock

Eagle, the organizer of this event, was involved in the original 'Skin & Steel' event back in NY. She has been passionate about creating a similar event here. Her membership in

the American Legion Riders of Post 2 made it a logical choice for American Legion Charities to be the beneficiary. Eagle explained that the judges for the bike & tattoo contests always come from within the ranks of the ALR Post 2 members.

The bike show was set up so that the same bike could be entered into multiple categories. Remember, this is a fundraiser for the American Legion. So, as example, if you have a vintage year customized Harley with an outstanding paint job, you could purchase an entry in three categories, Vintage, American Modified, & Paint. Something odd about this year.... With all those bikes in the parking lot, there were only 6-7 bikes in the show; whereas there'd been as many as 15 in previous years. The only explanation I can come up with is that on such a beautiful day, people wanted the freedom to take off and go for a ride rather than waiting for their bike to go through the judging process. And there were no Foreign bikes shown this year, so no one claimed the awards for 'Foreign Stock' or 'Foreign Modified'. What it tells those of you who are hesitant to put your bike into a show... give it a try. You might win something. And since the entry fees go to charity, you know it's all for a good cause. There were 2 judges reviewing the bikes and this year's awards were presented to Nativeman for Best Custom; Dan McMains for Best American Stock; James Doughton for Best American Modified; Scott Ross for Best Vintage; and Joseph Brinn for Best Art/Paint.

The Tattoo Contest was set up the same way. The same person could enter more than one tat for competition in different categories. On this day there were 11 categories with 65 tattoos to be judged. Aside from Most Tattooed Male & Female, all categories are unisex. Prior to the competition, the judges are instructed by tattoo artists for what to look for in a tat. During the contest, the competitors do not tell the judges who created their art. There were 3 judges for this show. Eagle

commented, "The judging got a little crazy as the clothes started coming off and we whittled down to the winners." Well, yeah... that's SOP for a tat show ☺ In the end, awards were presented to Ms Nikkei for Best Leg Sleeve, Best Religious, Best Small Color, Best Large Color, Best Large Black & Grey, Best Floral, and Most Tattooed Female; Gilbert Orduna for Best Small B&G; Cory Young for Most Unusual and Most Tattooed Male; and Dorothy Highfill for Best Arm Sleeve.

Eagle extended thanks to their sponsor Sailor Jerry Rum for their donations and participation of 2 spokes-models, who provided samples and took photos with attendees.

Gratitude was also expressed for the support of the Post's business neighbors. Eagle noted that at times there was no more space for bike parking in the Post's lot. The parking lots of the neighboring companies were filled to capacity and people still had to line the streets.

This year's attendance is estimated at 1000 people, a reflection of this event's steady growth. Lunch reportedly sold out in about 2 hours. That's a lot of traffic!

Proceeds of this gathering benefit American Legion Charities. About \$2,000 was donated this time, which is up from last year.

This event is set on the Post 2 calendar for the 3rd Saturday of each January. Eagle shared that the first year they held this, it was in April ~ it was freezing cold and raining. Since switching to January, this event has enjoyed 'Chamber of Commerce' weather.

An all-volunteer staff puts Skin & Steel together. There is strong dedication to making it bigger & better each year. Eagle and her team are already working on the 2015 show. More vendors & artists are always welcome. If you want to be involved in next year's event, go to <http://skinandsteelaz.com/> or email info@skinandsteelaz.com

We hope to see you there.

Betsy & Bruce