



# SILVER ANCHOR

SHAWN PORTER

*Sacred Debris*



A jeweler at Silver Anchor, circa 1980s.

*Editor's Note: This article was compiled by Kendra Jane Berndt from existing sources written by Shawn Porter. In addition to writing for Modblog, Shawn also edits [Occult Vibrations](#) tattoo blog as well as his personal diary at [Sacred Debris](#). Without his collection of writings, photographs, and personal accounts much of the history of body piercing would not be documented and archived as it currently is. I would like to thank Shawn for his continued work, as I was only able to compile the following because of his work.*

**Z**ephyrhills, Florida was first incorporated as a city in 1914. According to the 2000 Census it was home to 10,833 residents, many of whom were over 65 and retired. It's close to Tampa and to my hometown of Plant City, and can boast to being the birthplace of several famous NASCAR drivers, an American Idol finalist, and notorious [Ghoul Carl Tanzier](#). It was also, for a few years at least, the Body Modification capital of the world.

Far from the cultural meccas of the West Coast, Zephyrhills was where advanced body modification pioneer Mr.

Jay (Jack Yount) settled after his wife passed away and he retired from American Standard Plumbing, where his only full apprentice Mike Natali lived and where famed 'Modification Doctor' Ronald Brown made frequent visits for underground surgery. It was also the home base of Big Ed Fenster and the Silver Anchor Body Jewelry Company.

At the time finding body piercing jewelry was no easy task. In the 1980s and early 1990s manufacturing companies were few and far between. It was not available at every mall or website, and most tattoo shops didn't have piercers to buy it from/install it for you. The Gauntlet, Spain's Customs, Pleasurable Piercing, The Good Art Company, Toucan for gold, Wildcat in the UK, and Fenster's Silver Anchor were the big names at the time. Pre-internet. Some had catalogs while others had stapled and xeroxed price sheets, included with your order. When I first started buying from Silver Anchor they didn't even have a retail price list since they only served wholesale clients. Big Ed Fenster, a nudist, swinger, and friend of both Jack



Ed Fenster

and Sailor Sid Diller, owned the business. Silver Anchor shared its name with Sid's Ft. Lauderdale tattoo studio and was located in a small house that served as the office and Ed's living quarters. There were a few satellite trailers where the jewelry was manufactured.

Twenty something years later I still contend that Silver Anchor produced the finest quality body jewelry of all of the companies that were around back then. Open to interpretation I know, but during their "good years" with Mike Natali as GM and his partner Chuck as shop manager they put out top notch large gauge jewelry that had a mirror finish that I've never seen rivaled. Chuck was one of the few jewelers who, by hand, could produce a ring for a P.A. in  $\frac{1}{2}$ " stock with an inner diameter of  $\frac{1}{2}$ " with a threaded  $\frac{5}{8}$ " ball that fit perfectly. Sure, some of their output would make a devoted APP acolyte cringe; the 00ga externally threaded barbells I had made as a present to myself on my 17<sup>th</sup> birthday would likely cause a panic, but the threads were buffed for easy insertion and years later when I finally gifted them to a friend they had retained a perfect finish.

In my time visiting the shop - with Jack at first and then later to spend time with Mike and Chuck - it was always an adventure. My brother and I would meet up with Brian Skellie, Kevin Covella, and Rob Moore, maybe pack a few orders (when I first started going I was 16) and be in awe that we finally found people who 'got' it. Sometimes we'd continue on to Jack's house and document a modification procedure, meet some of his out of town friends, or just sit in the pool or hot tub and enjoy the company. The shift was taking place quickly from an older gay demographic to younger people who were taking on modification as a culture and not a kink and Jack was grooming us to help bridge the gap. Visits to Silver Anchor had them asking us questions about making 'earlets' since more people were stretching their lobes and despite having made custom half question mark shaped nipple jewelry they had never seen a stretched earlobe before mine.



You have to appreciate dealing with Ed whose entire history was with piercing as a sexual thing being able to make some of the most complicated "u-tubes" imaginable, but being completely vexed by the mechanics of a plug for stretched ear lobes. U-tubes were urethra tubes, which later went on to be universally referred to as 'Prince's Wands' and Ed specialized in them. I remember sitting at the desk one day packing orders and seeing this MONSTER of a tube in his inbox (back when the inbox was actually a box and not an email account) that he had made for himself. At the thickest it was a full  $\frac{5}{8}$ " with 1" balls and 4ga posts for his apadravya. I remember thinking that it looked more like a billy club than a dick accessory. Ed looked at me sheepishly and said "my girlfriend likes me to wear this when I fuck her."

Ultimately, under Mike's direction Silver Anchor became a powerhouse of a company. At the time it was a seller's market, and with body jewelry being as rare as it was, paying over \$20 wholesale for a 12ga ring wasn't uncommon. When things got too big the stresses started to appear and eventually Mike and his partner moved on to start Bravo! Body Jewelry. Several of the jewelers Ed had hired did the same, and before long over saturation of a niche product flooded a small area. Tattoo shops started selling body jewelry. Tampa, the nearest major

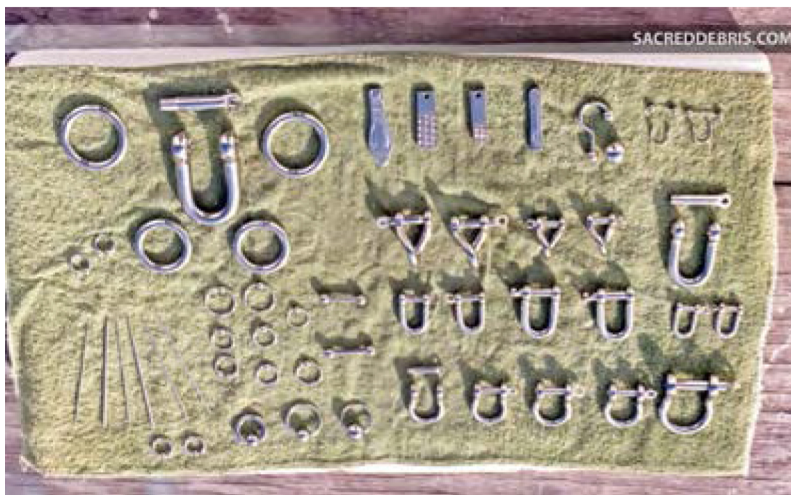
Emil Gundelach, Big Ed Fenster, and Mev Chapman (seated)





Above: Mike Natali (left) with Shawn Porter (right)  
 Below: Jewelry from the Silver Anchor  
 SABJ001 (archival photo number).  
 Location: Crystal Springs, Florida.  
 Year: Approximately 1988.

A selection of Silver Anchor Body Jewelry fresh from the buffing station. Items include tapered insertion pins, captive ball rings, barbells, screw on ball rings, stainless steel shackles and guiche weights.



city to Zephyrhills, saw a piercing only shop open under the name of Leather Tiger—that’s a story in and of itself—with a ‘head piercer’ who had to have *PFIQ*’s “Pierce with a Pro” open when he’d do a piercing. Once Jack Yount passed away things mostly fell apart.

In time Silver Anchor closed it’s doors. I’m not sure what happened to it’s back stock or employees. I’m not even sure what happened to Ed Fenster. But I still have a handful of my Silver Anchor jewelry in their original bags that I keep for old times’ sakes.

Here’s a video featuring Ed (with very little clothing, sterile or aseptic technique, or gloves - remember when it was filmed) that I posted on Modblog back in 2008. It’ll hopefully give you a glimpse into the [sexual nature of pre-1990s body piercing/modification](#).

### Have History, Will Travel

It must have been about 1991 when I first met Mike Natali; two decades later and we’ve taken to calling our first meeting ‘guiche day’ as both of us were at Jack Yount’s Zephyrhills, Florida house to have ours pierced when we were introduced and became fast friends. Mike became an older brother/uncle figure to my brother and I. Under his leadership, Ed Fenster’s Silver Anchor body jewelry company experienced massive growth and his own Bravo! Body Jewelry set a high bar for the companies that followed.

In late August I traveled down to Tampa to reconnect with Mike and to record an oral history with him about his introduction to Jack and Ed Fenster, his time at SA and Bravo and his career as a body piercer. The videos need to be edited and a transcript made, but it was really great to spend the afternoon with him and get his story told.

*Editor’s note: When I spoke with Shawn in February of 2017, these items still required transcribing.*