

## Melany Whitney

By Debbie Jensen



People are talking...about a technician/trainer in New Jersey by the name of Melany Whitney. It takes about a three minute conversation to realize that you have met someone who never quits. In business eight years, Melany is proof that hard work and determination really do pay off.

**DJ: Tell me about your introduction into permanent cosmetics.**

**MW:** Having been a graduate of Cornell University's School of Art & Architecture, and having been involved in the art world my entire life, was a good basis to start with. My mother was a commercial artist for The New York Times and my father was a family physician. I was blessed with my mother's talent and intrigued with my father's medical profession. I had been a New York City model for eleven years, during which I trained at the Fifth Avenue offices of Estee Lauder and had been offered a very lucrative career by Charles Revson of Revlon. The

profession I have chosen seems like an absolutely perfect fit!. Art, Fashion and Beauty, all while working within the offices of prominent doctors.

**DJ: What types of jobs did you hold previously?**

**MW:** State of New Jersey (Tenured) Art Teacher, Seventeen Magazine's Teen Board, Macy's Fashion Show coordinator, professional runway and market model, voice overs, commercials, professional makeup artist, member of A.F.T.R.A. ( Association of Film, Television, and Radio Artists), fine art framer, and MOTHER!

**DJ: Were your friends and family supportive of this chosen career?**

**MW:** My friends were, however my family was less than enthusiastic. For example; when I met with Frank Shields (Brooke Shield's father) and the president of Revlon, Charles Revson, I was offered a whopping \$18,000/year and an expense account. I was to be the counter manager for Ultima II at Bloomingdales, NYC and responsible for a million dollars (an enormous sum in 1972) worth of traffic a year! When I excitedly told my husband that I would be making more money than his veterinary degree had earned him, his response was, "Great, as long as you are home each night by 6:00 p.m. with dinner on the table." I decided not to stay married and declined that honor. What a road that would have lead me down! However, I feel that if my parents were both here today, they would very much approve of my chosen field!

**DJ: Where did you first offer your services? How did that go?**

Eight years ago,I learned from a Parisien woman and realized how I could easily use my skills as an artist to create artistry on a face. In the state of Florida then, there was very little offered in the way of education in Micropigmentation. I then studied under two plastic

surgeons who were into breast tattooing for their mastectomy reconstructions.

It all started in my kitchen in Boca Raton, for my good friends, and friends of their friends. We would all have a glass of wine, pull up the kitchen bar stools and I would stand, tattooing eyeliner and brows. When I realized how pleased my friends and family were with my work, I decided to set up a legitimate business. It's never too late to start another career, especially one in which you can run your own show.

**DJ: How many procedures would you estimate to have done up to this point?**

MW: In the beginning, I kept no records. I was lucky if I remembered who I had in my kitchen the night previously. However, my record now runs into the thousands.

**DJ: What do you like most about this career?**

MW: What I LOVE most about my career is the satisfaction that I derive after a 10-12 hour day of making so many women (and men) happier than when they arrived at my office. From the tears of joy on a breast cancer survivors' face when she catches the first glimpse of what now looks to be a "real" areola and nipple complex, to the delight of an older woman who has not seen her eyebrows in decades, or a young gal who is trying to put her best



Before & After Full Face

face forward all the time, but wasn't blessed with a pretty lip shape/color. The most frequent comment is "Why didn't I do this sooner?"

**DJ: What are your biggest challenges?**

MW: My frustration balancing a very successful career in three states, motherhood, and trying to take the time to "smell the roses."

**DJ: Have you ever felt like just giving up? What keeps you going?**

MW: Of course! Haven't most extremely busy people felt that way, even if just for a "nano second" at about 3:00 a.m., when I still have notes to transcribe into my computer! However, the sheer love of what I do keeps me going. Each day I can't wait to tune up my machine and "get into skin." There is always something to learn! Each client brings me a different "canvas".

**DJ: Which procedure do you consider your 'specialty' and why?**

MW: Brows, without a doubt. I see so much previous "bad grooming" from years of over plucking and waxing. I see some of the most horrific, and humorous attempts by women to recreate their missing brows. And, unfortunately, I do see some previous permanent cosmetic work that needs help.

**DJ: Do you have a favorite color, technique or product? Will you share them with us?**

MW: My favorite color has got to be Dark Brown from Cleo, but then again, it could be Coral, or Brow Warm Up and Cool Lip from Dermal Source. I only use a palette of approximately nine colors, so they all would have to be my favorites!

**DJ: What are your prices? Do you do any pro bono work?**

MW: Brows and eyeliner range from \$950- \$1450each. Lips range from \$1300-\$1700. Yes, I do "pro bono" work. If you can't give back then what are you here for?



Breast Work by Melany

**DJ: Tell me about your training experience(s).**

MW: In those days there were very few training classes. I sought out a woman from France whose mother and grandmother had taught them. I was also VERY fortunate to have the guidance of plastic surgeon, Myron Persoff, MD, FACS, (Mercy Hospital, Miami, Fl.) who favored a Huck Spaulding machine and let me practice with that as well as Dr. Jack Norman MD, FACS. I suppose that is one of the reasons that I have devoted much of my time to creating and instituting the Permanent Makeup Basic Training program at the Florida College of Natural Health, a division of Steiner Education Group.

**DJ: Tell me about your training program, if you are a trainer.**

MW: I am a SPCP (Society of Permanent Cosmetic Professionals) Trainer. I believe that they are the leaders in setting the industry standards and have been a tremendous help guiding me in what is needed to make my program successful and thorough!

One reason I enjoy teaching, is the reward I receive by sending properly trained technicians out into the field. They will be practicing Standard Precautions, keeping up with OSHA standards, and giving the public what they need. My classroom is filled with "high energy." When I stand in front of my students, I feel as if I am "on." That is one way in which I make their experience a consummate one, by being animated, and always full of surprise stories.

**DJ: How do you feel about the training programs considered "industry standard?"**

MW: For the present, it is the 60 hour required course by the SPCP. Do I feel that a technician should have an apprenticeship, just as in traditional tattooing? YES! I believe that if you train your students well, and explain that permanent cosmetic technicians need to "put the time in", then your students will realize that there are no "overnight success stories" and understand that there is no substitution for "practice,



practice, practice!"

**DJ: How many hours per week do you spend doing permanent cosmetics?**

MW: Six days a week, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. You do the math! I have tremendous energy and being a "night owl" helps. I suppose that what I really am trying to do is take advantage of that "energy" as long as it lasts!

**DJ: What type of equipment (method) do you use? Why is this your choice?**

MW: My choice is the Puma Quick Change machine by Huck Spaulding. If a coil machine has been the choice of conventional tattoo artists for over 150 years, it's good enough for me! And besides, when you get to know your machine so well, it is just an extension of your hand.

**DJ: How do you stay 'fresh' and on top of your game?**

MW: That's an easy question! The news letters from the SPCP and their incredible continuing education seminars and conventions are quintessential. The supporting network that this organization has is tremendous! I feel that I am never further than my computer/cell phone to get help. Ditto for Mary Jane Haake's Dermal Source newsletters also! Also, my doctor's medical magazines help me keep up-to-date on some skin issues.

**DJ: How do you promote your services? What methods have you tried? Which has proven most effective for you?**

MW: I have the services of my NY/NJ Clinical Director and sister, Joan Freedman who has a thorough understanding of media and PR from her career in beauty advertising sales. Having a business base in the capital of the publishing, broadcast and fashion/beauty market provides us with the visibility that we need to



get our services known. With a small advertising budget and industry wide contacts, pounding the streets with our portfolios to prominent physicians and beauty centers in Manhattan and NJ, as well as forwarding press information, we were able to be included in segments on Entertainment Tonight, Inside Edition, NBC Today, CNN, Fox News and continue to have editorial in local and national magazines.

**DJ: Do you have a website? How successful do you find your website to be in drawing new clientele?**

MW: An interesting answer to this question is with a story: About 6 years ago my oldest daughter suggested that the internet was "the way to go." I really didn't put much credence in that thought, but because it was coming out the mouth of "my" Harvard graduate, I felt maybe I would see if all that tuition was worth it. I gave her the task. We were very successful with our initial launch with so many future clients coming to us thru our site alone, but have now given our site to an official webmaster who is also launching one of the first men's sites! My site is [www.permanentmkup.com](http://www.permanentmkup.com)

**DJ: Are you affiliated with any organizations in support of this field? Which ones? What do you feel you gain through these memberships?**

MW: Have I mentioned the S.P.C.P yet? I can only say that I would not be where I am today without their help, support and guidance. Being certified through them, adds much prestige to my credentials. I am also a past member of Allied Health Association, NCTA (National Cosmetic Tattoo Association) and a current Fellow and Board Certified Instructor of the American Academy of Micropigmentation.

**DJ: Are there any 'shining moments' in your career which stand out in your memory?**

MW: Seeing myself on the highest rated morning news program, The Today Show, is probably at the top of my list. Having my first breast cancer survivor cry at the site of her newly re-pigmented areola and nipple complex, the young alopecia boy who called

me the next day before getting into the shower to make sure that his "new" brows wouldn't wash off, an M.S. client telling me that I am "an angel that was sent down to her" for giving her back her eyes with liner and shadow. Also, having Dr. Doris J. Day, the consulting dermatologist to Estee Lauder, television spokeswoman, prominent author, Allure and Redbook contributing columnist, asking ME do her permanent makeup!

**DJ: Do you have any employees or other people who work for/with you in some capacity? How do they increase your business?**

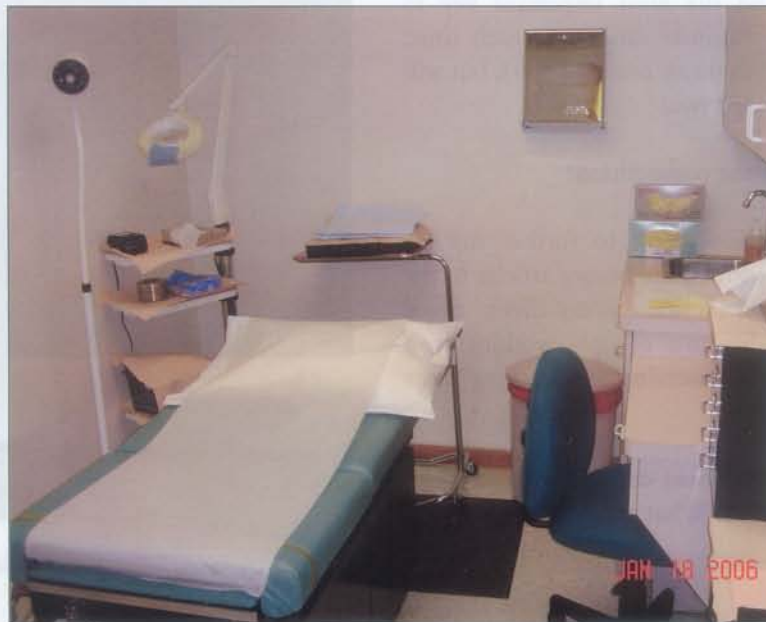
MW: I owe all my success to my Clinical Director and sister, Mrs. Joan Freedman, lovingly referred to as JoJo F. She is my PR person, marketing director, advisor and confident and handles our NYC/NJ clientele, conducting consultations and thorough follow-ups. She diligently formulated the locations we needed to service and sought out our prominent physician base. She also handles my business and social schedules and makes sure that I eat and take at least one "potty break" during the day. I'm very grateful for my daughters, Lauren Meredith Winkler, who helps with Web staging ideas and copy; and Paige Tyler Kauffman, who has been asking for eyebrows since she could understand what I did for my profession, and still does at age 14!

**DJ: Have you ever encountered an allergic reaction? Was this situation able to be remedied? How?**

MW: The only allergic reactions were to the use of Bacitracin. Although I have my clients fill out medical forms, one client failed to note her allergy to antibiotic ointments. She was referred back to her dermatologist who gave her kenilog crème and that took care of her reaction.

**DJ: Who are your hero's and mentors in this industry and why?**

MW: Without a doubt, Pati Pavlik, Elizabeth Finch-Howell, Mary Jane Haake, and Kate Ciampi. These are a special group of women unto themselves, without whom our industry would still remain in the "Dark Ages." These women were truly the original crew of



the "Starship Enterprise, daring to go where no one had gone before." Their knowledge and consummate sharing of it, guidance and leadership has been, and continues to be without reservation. Their energy in keeping our entire cosmetic and tattoo industry up-to-date is unsurpassed.

**DJ: What do you feel sets you apart from other technicians in your area?**

MW: Well, you asked so I shall "toot my own horn," so-to-speak. I feel my artistic ability and eye for beauty and perfection, total compassion and patience with my clientele, sense of humor in the face of challenge, and the enormous energy that keeps me going without compromise during nearly continuous 18-hour days. I treat each and every client as my ultimate "work of art."

**DJ: How do you feel about existing legislation in your state and industry? What do you feel needs to be changed?**

MW: I am very vocal on my feelings about current legislation. I feel as most who are truly and altruistically involved in our industry do: **THAT WE NEED TO HAVE A STANDARD THAT EVERYONE MEETS.** By that I mean we need to make the SPCP certification exam a requirement and have a better system of checks and balances, regulated only by our governing organization, so that we all are practicing in the most safe and effective way possible.

**DJ: What advice would you want to share with new technicians in order to help them be more successful?**

MW: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! You will feel more "comfortable" performing procedures in a short time, with perseverance and patience. And the most important key to advertising is giving out your business cards, two each time, instead of just one. People tend to throw one card away, but will keep at least one if they are handed two!

**DJ: How do you stay ahead of the competition?**

MW: By running faster! I always look to further my art education, and I also keep up with all the beauty articles in the major fashion magazines. I REALLY listen to my clients' needs and wants. I also have the advantage of only working in a physicians office, so I am always observing and learning more about "working in skin".

**DJ: What is to come after permanent cosmetics, is there an after? Where do you go from here? What are your dreams?**

I have a five year plan, to go back to school and take my last year as a PA (physician's assistant in Dermatology) and then do a year of rotations. After that is completed, I will be able to return to my craft as a Permanent Cosmetics Professional, yet also be able to inject all the new fillers into the faces of my clients and REALLY complete the job. I do not ever see me not continuing to help make women (and men) more beautiful than they already are! And to continue to help bring this incredible industry of ours to where it deserves to be. ☺



Above: Oil painting adapted from original photograph by Annie Leibovitz.



Paintings by Melany Whitney