



ANNA LEMPEREUR MOINE

AWARDS

A Personal Note: Where I'm Coming From

Mary Bemis

In the fall of 2013, I was honored by the International Spa Association with the distinguished Dedicated Contributor Award. Many people have asked for the text of my speech, and I realize that it's a very good explanation of where InsidersGuidetoSpas.com is coming from. So, here it is. Hope you enjoy it!

Thank you, and a warm, warm welcome to old friends and new. I am humbled, I am honored, and I am extraordinarily happy to be standing before you today. When Ella [Stimpson, Chair, International Spa Association] phoned to tell me that I was this year's recipient of the Dedicated Contributor Award, I worried that I had busted her eardrums because I

screamed so loudly! For I was, and I am overjoyed to be recognized by an industry that I love so much, and that has been at the very core of my life. Spa is an industry that represents the values that I hold dear.

Let me explain that. About a decade before the first destination spa came to America, the spa lifestyle came to my family. The reason? My mother was afflicted with polio, for which there was no cure. My grandmother massaged her legs every single day with warm olive oil from the time she was 20 months old until she was eight. Every single day. She also had swimming lessons to make her legs stronger, and she was brought to the ocean for the healing benefits of salt water. And of course, real, fresh food was the only kind served. Why do I say “of course?” Because in those days, we couldn’t count on medicine to save us. (I’m not so sure we can today, but that’s another story.)

My mother, now 80, still vividly remembers the tall young orthopedic specialist who could not understand why she didn’t suffer the muscle loss characteristic of polio victims. As it turns out, my mother was the only child to walk out of her hospital ward without a brace on her leg. So, you can see why spa is so personal to me — it meant my mother could walk.

But it wasn’t until the 80s, when I wrote my first article about spas for a fitness magazine, that I really began to understand what I had grown up with. After all, if you are a fish, you don’t necessarily see the water. It was then that I realized that Spa went beyond fitness, beyond nutrition, beyond beauty. Spa is the culmination of what we now call “wellness.”

I had taken it all for granted—but what I really took for granted was that spa was extraordinarily powerful—and not that well understood. And so, I made it my mission to spread the good spa word. Educating professionals and consumers alike on the benefits of

spa has given me tremendous pleasure and personal satisfaction over the past 25 years. I love bringing the industry together and exposing more people to it. For a world of spa means a world of health, of healing, of possibility.

Why am I sharing this with you? Because this is the power we have. Spa has the power to bring people back into their bodies. Spa has the power to calm and to bring self-awareness. To remind us that we're all connected. Let us not forget our humble beginnings—that spas grew up around bodies of water—hot springs and lakes and rivers—places where people laid down their weapons to take the waters. Spas have always been places of refuge.

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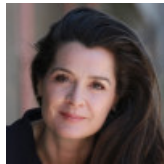
Spa, my dear colleagues, is not trivial. Its meaning and mission are ancient and real. Spas give us back our humanity. They encourage us to explore our senses. To take a step back and a deep breath in. To take the time to question and to reflect—and to be a better person in the world at large.

If you don't know that the bottom line of spas is about healing, then you're in the wrong business.

I was happy to learn that the conference theme this year is growth. I couldn't imagine a better theme for

us. Although we live on a planet that arguably can't sustain much more growth—the planet needs us to grow. To grow mindfully and sustainably, for spas offer exactly the kind of growth the world needs—Growth through your senses, growth through nature, growth for a better world.

I am so honored to be ISPA's Dedicated Contributor, and I thank you again for recognizing me—but I'm not done contributing yet! My own growth involves my newest project, InsidersGuidetoSpas.com, a media project that I'm excited to share with you. For my mission is simple and clear—to keep spa culture alive! Thank you.



MARY BEMIS

Mary Bemis is editorial director of InsidersGuidetoSpas.com. She is an award-winning spa journalist, honored with Folio's Top Women in Media Award, and the distinguished ISPA Dedicated Contributor Award. In 1997, she launched *American Spa* magazine, and in 2007, Mary co-founded *Organic Spa* magazine. A pioneer in the sustainable spa and beauty worlds, Mary is co-curator of *Cosmoprof North America's Discover Green Pavilion*. She sits on the board of *Wellness Warrior*, is a *Global Wellness Day* Advisor and a co-founder of the *Washington Spa Alliance*