



### BEAUTY AND THE BIZ

In 2005, ISPA celebrated its 15th anniversary, and Conference was held at the Gaylord Texan in Dallas, Texas. In attendance was Ada Polla, co-founder of the Swiss, plant-based skin-care line, Alchimie Forever, and Edwin Neill III, CEO of the Neill Corporation and then president of the ISPA Foundation. The two, who come from spa families, met at the Alex Szekely Humanitarian of the Year Award dinner held at Rosewood Mansion on Turtle Creek.

"My first impression of Edwin was 'Wow!'" says Ada. "I remember his eyes first, they were blue and sparkly. I didn't know him, so I didn't have any idea of who he was or what he was doing. It was both a physical and an intellectual attraction. I remember at some point understanding that he was also in a family business, and I thought that was cool." Ada's parents, who live in Geneva, Switzerland, are physicians and owners of the medical spa, Forever Laser Institut, and Edwin is the third generation to carry on a successful family business, began by his grandparents.

Edwin, who first noticed Ada in her booth on the tradeshow floor, recalls of that dinner, "When we spoke, I couldn't figure out where she was from. From that moment on, I was totally fascinated."

The table seating at the dinner that evening was not a mere coincidence. Ada and Edwin were specifically seated together via place cards by their hostess, Mary-Elizabeth Gifford, a former ISPA board member and a co-founder and vice president of the Washington Spa Alliance. In keeping with the spirit of Alex Szekely, himself, a member of the second generation of a spa family, she reached out to introduce young talents, including Edwin and Ada, who were working hard in a family business. Whether she anticipated more than a business relationship between the couple, she won't say.

In fact, it was love at first sight, but it took a few years to get to the dating stage, says Ada, who notes that both she and Edwin were entangled in relationships. After several ISPA Conference meetings later, they once again met in 2007 at an ISPA Knowledge Network in Washington, D.C. This time, Ada was no longer in a relationship, while Edwin was in a newer one. And, well, by ISPA Conference 2008 in Vegas, the two were dating and trying to keep it low-key.

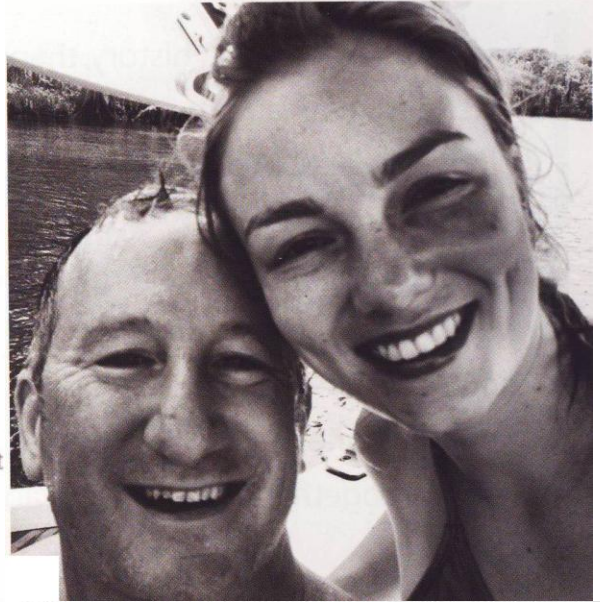
Fast forward to Nov. 10, 2010 (a few days after ISPA Conference), Edwin proposed. He had flown back to New Orleans a day after Conference, and Ada had agreed to join him

the next day. "I was pulled out, utterly exhausted, and only wanted to sleep for five days," she recalls. By the time her flight landed in New Orleans, she was hungry, grumpy, and irritated to find out that the Neill Corporation had cancelled the taxi account she usually called.

By the time she arrived at Edwin's, he took one look at her, realized the state she was in, and told her he was going to open a bottle of champagne to make her feel better. While sitting out in his courtyard, Ada says she had "zero idea of what was to come."

"The weather turned cooler and he went inside to get his jacket, which he placed over me, telling me that there was a present for me in the pocket. I put my hand in a pocket, and pulled out his iPhone. He told me to try the other pocket." She did and pulled out a small box. Edwin proposed to her on bended knee. On January 1, 2011, the two wed in a private ceremony at the French Quarter Wedding Chapel.

"I found love where I least expected it," shares Ada. "I never thought I'd date anyone from the industry." Edwin adds, "Networking is great for business, as well as for love."



**Edwin Neill and Ada Polla, now married, first met at the 2005 ISPA Conference & Expo.**