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Posted on November 8, 2011 at 12:26 pm

## BeautyView: Debra Neill Baker, Chairman of Neill Corporation

I am writing this from Las Vegas, it is day 2 of the International Spa Association annual conference. The week of ISPA is always dear to me, not only for the industry learning, the visits with my favorite spa people, but also because ISPA has played such an important role in my relationship with my husband Edwin. After the BeautyView on Susie Ellis of SpaFinder (who is responsible for my meeting Edwin), it seems only fitting to interview my step-mother-in-law, Debra Neill Baker, Chairman of Neill Corporation, also referred to as Chief Energy Officer and self-declared Beauty Evangelist. I remember the first time I met her, at ISPA 2005 in Dallas, TX; I remember she was wearing a gorgeous white pant suit (she usually wears Aveda black on black); I have learned so much from her, still feel like I have so much to learn... starting with striking the word "favorite" from my vocabulary...

**AP:** What city were you born in? **DN:** I was born in Kansas, farm community...no city within 100 miles.

**AP:** What city do you live in? **DN:** I have lived the past 30 years in the country 50 miles outside of New Orleans. Might sound similar and it's nothing the same!

**AP:** What is your middle name? **DN:** June, after my Aunt Ava June.

**AP:** What is your astrological sign? **DN:** Taurus.

**AP:** What is your favorite thing about the beauty (and spa) industry? **DN:** it's life-supporting and gives us the opportunity to truly "touch" others.

**AP:** Least favorite thing? **DN:** favorite is not a word I use much..."least favorite thing"...even less!

**AP:** What is your most prized possession? **DN:** My home.

**AP:** What is something about you most people don't know? **DN:** That I freak out (inside) when I speak in public... I seldom appear to be nervous. I move right through the fear and use it to create energy!

**AP:** Do you wear a watch? If yes, what model? **DN:** Yes. I wear a man's Cartier that I have had for 18 years... I am practical and extravagant simultaneously, and I value quality and timelessness.

**AP:** Diamonds or pearls? **DN:** Definitely diamonds...although I have very few. Jewelry has never been that compelling to me.

**AP:** If you could have dinner with the person of your choice, who would it be? **DN:** My children, Garrison and Paris... my best work and best teachers.

**AP:** What is your secret to work/life balance? **DN:** I re-framed and re-defined balance years ago. I live a blurred life... work and life are intertwined intentionally. And balance is not a steady state; it's a dynamic and energizing lifestyle that works for me.



Debra Neill Baker, Chairman, Neill Corporation

**AP:** What are your three top tips for travel? **DN:** 1. Let home be wherever I am. 2. Carry my essential oils/botanical aromas for anointing my environment. 3. Be in the Flow: accept delays, cancellations, etc... breathe, hydrate, read...

**AP:** What is your favorite book? **DN:** There's that favorite word again... books have been my primary self-development tool my entire life, including from *Your Erroneous Zones* to *Think and Grow Rich* to *As A Man Thinketh* to anything by Rumi or Thich Nhat Hanh.

**AP:** What is your cocktail of choice? **DN:** Vodka is my cocktail of choice...for the effect not the taste!

**AP:** What is your #1 beauty secret? **DN:** No secrets, but rather purposeful decisions, a lifetime of taking care of this vehicle/temple/body, mind, and spirit. I have always had a whole-person approach...beauty/health/energy is an inside/outside process...breathing, moving, hydrating, conscious-eating, and sleeping!

**AP:** What fragrance do you wear? **DN:** I haven't worn synthetic fragrance for over 30 years...Horst/Aveda created an awareness and sensitivity that has influenced my olfactory system forever! I wear Aveda aromas.

**AP:** Botox or not? **DN:** Why not?!

**AP:** Hair color: natural or not? **DN:** naturally, haircolor!

**AP:** 3 songs on your ipod right now. **DN:** Peter Gabriel/New Blood, my old stand-by Al Green, My Morning Jacket... I thrive on diversity.

**AP:** Quote to live by? **DN:** "Relationship is the key to the Universe ... and the relationship with Self is at the source of it all."

**AP:** Who is your mentor? **DN:** I have many... from my grandmother to my late husband Edwin to my present husband Michael to my children and too many in-between to list! When I was in my early teens I decided that I wanted to learn from everyone, from many teachers and Gurus...and ultimately be my own Guru! That may sound like a bit of arrogance... and truly, it's about being a self-control freak!

**AP:** Words of advice for young women starting their careers today? **DN:** Be clear about your values, what is truly important and meaningful to you, what gives you a feeling of fulfillment... that will lead you to work that expresses who you are and who you want to be!

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**KEYWORDS :** beautyview | Debra Neill Baker | ISPA | Neill Corporation

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