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FROM LAWYER SKIN-CARE TO GURU

Ex-lawyer, Diana Zouppas, tells Lifescape how a serious case of teenage acne led to a major career swap

When I left my homeland, Greece, to come to London, I had a clearly set out plan to become a lawyer and specialise in shipping law. Coming from a family involved in shipping, it made sense to combine the two things I loved the most: sea and justice. I wanted to restore balance to the world of the international trade of goods by sea and most importantly protect our seas from environmental pollution.

I gained a Master's degree in shipping law and worked as a solicitor in a leading law firm and then moved to the family business in Greece to operate a fleet of cargo vessels. For months I found myself travelling on board bulk carriers in order to implement changes in the law and regulations. I'd been told that "being female, good looking and not a seaman would not lead to a distinguished career in shipping", but I performed my duties successfully and earned the trust and respect of the crew.

I was soon noticed by an American corporation with offices around the world and each month found myself spending ten days in London, ten in New York and another ten in Bermuda – it was my own Bermuda triangle. I really was leading a full on jet-set lifestyle.

But after a few years I started to realise that my original plan to do something meaningful in life hadn't happened. I'd ended up in this fast lifestyle full of meetings and cases to be fought that were part of a big mechanism – very much out of the reach of the ordinary everyday person.

On one of those red eye flights from New York to London, I looked down at the big blue sea, somewhere over the Atlantic and remembered how life's little things – a compassionate ear, a hug, a warm smile, a meaningful touch had always given me the most happiness.

It was then I made the decision that sooner or later I would have to create my own world, away from this crazy →

whirlwind around countries, where I could soothe and calm the souls of those stressed out executives like me and give some meaning back into their life. I wanted to give care and attention to people who needed to re-energise and not just spend hours within an anonymous corporation.

TEENAGE YEARS

I worked out that the way to do this was to revisit my teenage years in Greece, where a very different career had been open to me. For various reasons I'd chosen not to take this very interesting career option of a life in the skincare and health business.

At 16 years old I was suddenly plagued with severe acne. I tried everything conventional medicine had to offer to clear it, but with no results. Then I was introduced to a couple of holistic beauty therapists who transformed my skin in just under six months. The Cavallieratos couple, who back then were mostly specialising in anti-ageing preparations, treated my skin as a challenge – their first ever difficult case of acne. If they could stop the spots and repair my skin it would be a great achievement and would herald the launch of an anti-acne range of products they already had in the making.

The potent herbal formulas used on my skin instilled in me a genuine interest in plants, herbs and essential oils and their powers. I wanted to know how could good old rosemary that my mum was using in stews, be such a deep cleanser for the skin? How could thyme be such a spot buster? My curiosity to find out more about the beneficial properties of all the plants and herbs that helped my skin developed into an obsession with all things natural and holistic. After school I would spend hours reading the encyclopaedia of plants and herbs and loads of books on herbalism. During my university days I would spend any spare time going to courses on nutrition.

Bad eating habits, wrong combinations of foods and

intolerance to certain foods had a big role to play in my acne and when the Cavallieratos couple opened my eyes to a natural world of goodness and healthy eating I was instantly converted into what my lawyer colleagues later called a 'health freak'.

When my acne cleared-up, people told me how fresh and pretty I looked, which gave me a new found confidence. The Cavallieratos couple were so proud of their achievement that they asked me to become their model. I became the face of Cavalliert and even today, 18 years later, my face is featured on all their brochures and posters.

Back then I would talk to everyone about my experiences and I became an inspirational example for many other 'spotty' teenagers. I was told that my future should be in this holistic industry, but not just as a model. It was suggested that I study herbalism, nutrition and beauty therapy so that I could take over from the Cavallieratos couple, and thus pass their wisdom to the next generation.

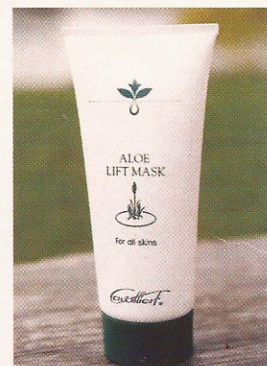
Of course, I didn't listen. I had my heart set on becoming a lawyer and feared that if I stayed in the beauty and modelling world the cliché of 'a pretty face without a brain' would haunt me later on in life.

I continued to model for the company but I kept it a secret from my colleagues in London. I had such a fear that people wouldn't take me seriously if I told them that during my holidays I was the face of a natural skincare brand back in Greece. My obsession with healthy eating, however, did not go unnoticed. In a corporate culture full of booze, cigars and entertaining clients with some of the most expensive wines around, my order of mineral water with the meal and peppermint tea to follow did raise eyebrows.

MAKING THE BREAK

I was thinking about all this on the plane returning from New York to London in 1999. It seemed to me that the Millennium heralded a new era for us all. After much soul

I MADE A CAREER
U TURN AND
EXCHANGED
MY LAW
REPORTS FOR
AROMATHERAPY
BOOKS



My daily trip on the London underground was replaced by months of vigorous training at the Cavalliert farm in Greece

NOT JUST A FACIAL

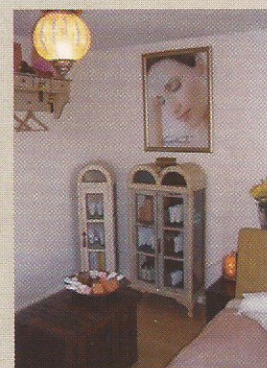
"When I was feeling in need of some pampering some time back, a friend recommended I visit Diana at her retreat in Kew," said *Lifescape* editor, Rajasana. "I had actually sampled one of her powerful lavender scrubs prior to the visit and after talking with her on the phone about her different products felt this might be my chance for a proper cleanse. I managed to sneak away for the afternoon to try it out. As soon as I entered her retreat I noticed the calm attractive décor. Diana is one of those people who thinks about every last detail – a far cry from a little room and a massage bed. This was like a beautiful uplifting apartment. I went into the bathroom to change. The bath, full of water and pebbles, was brimming with gorgeous rose petals.

"Diana took me to her treatment room and, rather than a high-up massage bed, I was asked to lie down on what seemed more like a sofa. As she did the treatment, Diana explained each

product to me, how it was made and the way it would work – the kind of information every woman longs for. She also gave me some top beauty tips (stop eating too many chilies) and discussed issues I had with my skin. During the masks (yes, more than one) I thoroughly relaxed.

"This was far more than just a facial although my skin felt as smooth as a baby's afterwards. This was a cleanse that actually went deep down. (That's what I was told it would be, and trust me, I felt it.) You know that feeling when you drink lots of water and eat healthily after an unhealthy stage? I felt so good, after the initially funny feeling you get when you have a therapy that works!

"I can certainly vouch for the fact Diana is now in the right job: *Legally Blonde* reversed is what springs to mind. She was a great lawyer, but those special touches were wasted in her previous profession and the knowledge she has makes superficial cleanses a thing of the past."



"My skin felt as smooth as a baby's afterwards. This was a cleanse that actually went deep down"

searching I decided that I would do what I could to follow my natural path and go back to beauty.

I made a career U turn and exchanged my law reports for aromatherapy books, ditched my black and white suits and brought colours into my wardrobe and my life. I now work from a purple office and wear mostly white and green, my own corporate colours, representing purity, hope and positive energy.

My daily trip on the underground to the office was exchanged for months of vigorous training at the Cavalliert farm in Greece. I had to learn everything there is to know about the plants and herbs used in the products and the right combinations of essential oils, vitamins, enzymes and natural trace elements beneficial to the skin.

My regular trips to court were replaced by long hours of training in Shiatsu, Thai and Indian massage with emphasis on acupressure on the face and overall lymphatic drainage. My international travel continued, but this time not to meet another top executive, but to seek spirituality, study and learn next to some incredibly enlightened spiritual masters and healers.

Shopping trips in 5th Avenue were substituted with treks through the markets of exotic places such as Hong Kong for the best jade to use in my facial massages, China for the best pearl powder for my anti-ageing potions and Brazil to source the best amethyst, citrine and quartz for crystal healing treatments.

I decided that the Cavalliert wisdom was such a wonderful concept of combining external beauty with a properly nourished body and a well-balanced healthy lifestyle that it should not remain in Greece. So I started my own business in London, distributing the Cavalliert natural beauty products through a network of beauty salons across the UK and through the Internet, overseas too. Month after month I receive 'thank you' cards and letters from clients whose skin has been saved, or whose life I have touched – it means so much.

THE RETREAT

I do feel that being treated in my Cavalliert Skincare Retreat is a unique experience. In just under two hours I analyse a person's skin, identify other areas of potential ailments within the body through the skin, rebalance their energy, offer the deepest holistic facial ever experienced, massage aches and pains away and leave the client floating in happiness and luxurious comfort for days to come.

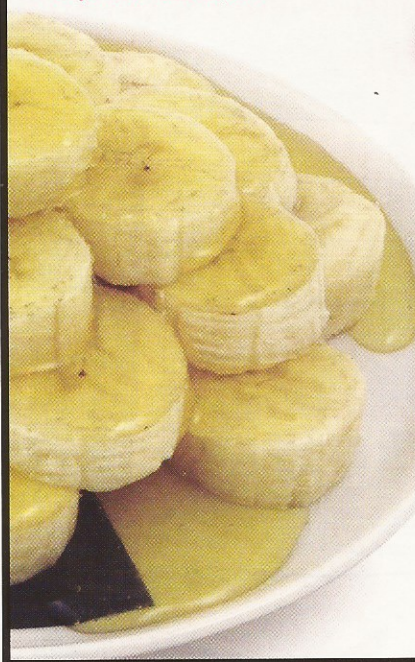
If needed I design a healthy eating plan to complement the home care regime the client will have to follow until they reach the optimum levels of a healthy glow from within, not just on the surface. From acne to anti-ageing care, I've developed a tailor made concept designed for individual age groups and skin types.

I've designed the retreat with ultimate comfort in mind, an atmosphere of a home from home, where people can

WINTER FIX WITH DIANA'S 'FIRST AID' MASK!

In winter in the UK and similar latitudes, we have to face two enemies: low temperatures with strong winds outdoors, combined with central heating indoors. Extreme temperature changes are responsible for the dehydration of the skin and the dull tired look most of us have in the winter. Moving from hot to cold contracts the pores much more than needed and puts extreme pressure on the capillaries, which can often break during the cold winter months. Winter is the season that could really leave our skin dehydrated, dull, flaky, irritated and rough if we do not keep on nourishing and protecting it the most. So for those of you in need of emergency repair try Diana's 'first aid' face mask:

INGREDIENTS * 1 very ripe avocado
* 1 ripe banana * 100g fresh double cream or any vegetarian alternative
* 1 tsp fresh lemon juice



HOW TO MAKE Peel and slice the avocado then put the pieces in a blender. Blend until it becomes a smooth paste. Peel the banana and cut into small pieces. Add them to the avocado paste and blend again until the two ingredients bond together. Add the double cream and blend. Finally, add the lemon juice and blend again. Now, it's ready!

HOW TO USE Apply a thick layer onto a clean face and neck. Leave on for 20-30 mins. Remove with lukewarm water. Can be used everyday to nourish the skin, restore its moisture levels and tackle wrinkles with its antioxidant ingredients.

come in, get changed in a bathrobe and slippers, have a relaxing herbal tea and leave all their stresses and worries behind. All the colours, textures and materials have been selected with Feng Shui principles in mind to promote the free flow of positive energy. I love my work so much, the swap was so worth it! I'm invited to talk on radio shows and seminars and have a wonderful team of people around me. I also train other therapists to learn my techniques. I know now that following your true calling brings happiness." ☺

*** To find out more about Cavalliert products and treatments call 020 8568 4565 or visit the website at www.cavalliert.co.uk**