



**LEON DESPRES: REMARKS IN ACCEPTANCE  
OF FIRST-EVER BPI THORN-IN-THE-SIDE AWARD  
MAY 1, 2003**

Thank you very much for that generous introduction. I enjoyed every single word of it. I'd like to quote what Huckleberry Finn said when asked what he thought about Mr. Samuel Clemens' book, *Tom Sawyer*. He said, "There were many things he stretched, but mainly he told the truth." Thank you very much.

I deeply appreciate the award. I appreciate it because of the source. There is no voluntary association I admire and love so much as BPI. It has been a tremendous experience.

And so, the award from BPI means a very great deal to me. It's the most congenial organization I know. I think of all the people who are here, and I think of Gordon Sherman of Midas Muffler, in the past, and Marshall Patner, who were active, Alexander Polikoff, and so many others. Hoy McConnell, Bill Farley, Bettylu Saltzman, and Alan Saks, who wants every meeting to end at 9 p.m. And all others whose views I share with enthusiasm.

In any event, I'm now a *certified* thorn-in-the-side. I think the title will be useful, especially useful in the practice of law. I hope it will frighten my opponents.

But I haven't always been a thorn-in-the-side. It's taken a lifetime to achieve such a title. I've had to work at it, follow advice, follow examples, test

myself, and now, finally, tonight, I've achieved the summit. I've received BPI's Oscar. I am a Certified Public Thorn-in-the-Side.

When Maureen Stapleton, the actress, received her Oscar, she said—and I want to adopt what she said—she said, "I wish to thank everybody I have known in my entire life." They've all contributed to my being a thorn-in-the-side.

But the greatest thorn-in-the-side is BPI itself. If you needed any proof of it, Hoy McConnell's talk was an excellent example of how BPI is the great thorn-in-the-side for Chicago. It's constantly stinging: "Stop racial discrimination," it stings. "Create small schools." "Provide affordable housing." It never sleeps; it never stops. "Build diversified communities." "End sprawl." And then, the great historical sting that those of us who have been at BPI a long time look back on with such pleasure and pride, "Don't do it in the lake."

I was very flattered by Alexander Polikoff's saying that I quoted Emerson and all kinds of other writers. So, I'm going to try to be consistent. I want to read to you from Plato, just a couple of lines. Plato has a description, which he ascribes to another person, which is really a wonderful description of BPI itself. And this is it:

"It is literally true"—Plato has this organization say; of course, Plato didn't know about BPI, but he wrote about it anyhow—"It is literally true, even if it sounds rather comical, that I have been specially appointed to this city as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which, because of its great size, is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that I have been attached to this city to perform the office of such a fly; and all day long I"—for I read *BPI*—"never cease to settle, here, there, and everywhere, rousing, persuading, reproofing everyone."

I am proud and privileged to be and to have been a small part of BPI. Thank you.