

Hutton Lauren

JJ: How were you discovered?

LH: I discovered myself! I came to New York because I had a goal: to see the world, to see Africa—and for this I needed money. I was making \$50 a week as a house model at Christian Dior for nine months (a job I got by answering an ad in the paper) before I learned that photographic models made \$50 an hour!

JJ: How did you go about getting an agency?

LH: There were five agencies in town at the time. I saw each of them—starting at the bottom of the list—and four of them turned me down. But I listened to the reasons for each rejection and took the time to try to fix my faults before seeing the next one. If they said lose ten pounds, I lost ten pounds. If they said I needed more headshots, I got more headshots. I even tried to stretch my spine out: I'd hang upside down from a pole I put up in a doorway.

JJ: How tall are you?

LH: I was 5'7^{1/2}" then. Now I'm 5'6^{1/4}". Against my doctor's advice, I didn't take hormone replacement therapy after menopause. I got osteoporosis as a result and I lost an inch and a quarter in one year! I was the shortest model all the time I modeled. I was the first of the short models before Kate Moss. Most of the girls were 5'10" or 5'11".

JJ: So what happened at the fifth agency you went to see?

LH: Ford was the last agency I went to and Eileen (Ford) took me. She wanted me to fix my nose and my teeth. I said, "Sure, great, as soon as I have enough money," but I really had no intention to.

JJ: Then were you an overnight success?

LH: No! I was with another agency called Mannequins for shows (at the time, most photographic models didn't do the shows).

I'd get one job a week which would keep me in go-see and subway money. I lived on 23-cent chicken pot pies. Some models think once you're with an agency, you've got it made. You never have it made unless you're born with a face like Amber Valletta's—a face anyone could take a picture of. There are plenty of beautiful girls who don't photograph well. A born model is almost a genetic freak. A born model has a small head, a very symmetric face, amazing bone structure, a proportioned body—they are very rare creatures, maybe one in ten thousand, and they are the ones that become supermodels. The rest of the models are almost there, but not quite. I was short, but luckily I had even bones which made me look taller in photographs.

JJ: How was the modeling business different back then?

LH: Then you would have six jobs a day. You were booked by the hour. Also, European clients paid about a third of what New York clients paid, so I never worked in Europe.

JJ: Despite your height, the gap in your teeth, and the nose Eileen wanted fixed, you were incredibly determined. How can models today follow your example and take charge of their careers?

LH: I was told to try modeling for a year and then quit if I wasn't making it. For the first nine months with Ford I'd work as an extra—I'd be standing behind the big model who was in the foreground. I had good legs and arms, so I'd get jobs as a leg model for shoes. I worked four times harder than anyone else. I didn't know New York, but I was determined to figure it out and make enough money to see the world. The agency would give me three appointments a day, and I'd make six more for myself. Agencies are secretarial services really. Don't ever think an agency will make you. They're certainly



your partners, but you have to go after it. I look at my first appointment book from 1965 and I get dizzy. I kept a go-see book and went back with new pictures to anyone who was encouraging. I was constantly in a phone booth—we didn't have cell phones then!—calling photographers. Young photographers would test for free, and I would test with anyone, any time. Even if the photographer was bad (unless their pictures were "vulgar," which meant nudes in those days), I'd test just for the practice. Models need to practice; it's hard to be real, to be at ease, in front of a stranger holding a machine in his face. I ran into three models on the street the other day and I asked them how often they tested. They hadn't tested in months! I never went a week without testing two, three, four times a week. I even was newly in love, completely besotted, but still I would cancel a date on Saturday night if a test came up. Unless you're one of those girls that a tree stump could take a picture of, work must come first! Learn how to do makeup. Study photographers' contact sheets—of you and of other models. Study how the light affects your face—no one will do this for you. Practice. Buy or borrow magazines—I had to borrow them (I only owned one dress!). Study them. Now models are up against the most beautiful girls from all over the world, so working hard is even more important.

JJ: What was your big break?

LH: I had been with Ford about nine months when I had a chance to show clothes to Diana Vreeland at *Vogue* (they would have new models show the clothes, not the real models). She was one of the most powerful people in the industry—she really had her own eye—and she liked me. This was '65, a couple of years before the hippy era would start, and I didn't wear a bra or much makeup. The models in *Vogue* were still in the '50s; they'd be in makeup for three hours. Vreeland was starting to see an odd, new kind of people on the street, and I was one of them. I remember her sitting at her desk: she looked like a great raptor. I was sitting on a windowsill watching her, when she stopped mid-sentence and said, "You!" She was pointing at me, but not looking at me, and I looked behind me in disbelief that she was addressing me. Of course nothing was behind me except a window. She then said, "You have quite a presence." I didn't know what that meant but I took a guess that it was something positive and replied, "So do you, ma'am." At the end of the day she asked me to show her my book—I remember her office with this great leopard skin rug. She looked at my book and said, "I'm sending you to Avedon tomorrow." I responded, "Ma'am, I've seen him three times; I don't think he likes me." She told me she thought he would like me this time, and sure enough, the next day I was working with Avedon.

JJ: Tell us about that first big job.

LH: I was inexperienced so Avedon was having a hard time getting me to move naturally. Finally he stopped trying to shoot and asked me about myself. He asked where I came from, and I told him that I grew up in the swamp lands in Florida. He asked me what I did there. I said, "We played in the swamps and jumped around." So I spent the rest of that day jumping. Three months later, *Vogue* came out with 14 pages of me jumping—gapped teeth included, as Avedon wouldn't let me put wax between my teeth like I usually did.

JJ: What were some of your best jobs?

LH: Revlon, since I did it all the way up until age 40 (I guess they didn't think women over 40—baby boomers!—wore makeup). The Paris collections were probably the most fun. And working with Penn and Avedon—they're both extraordinary men.

JJ: You were the first model to get a makeup contract; tell us how that came about.

LH: I saw a story on the front page of the *New York Times* about a baseball player, Catfish Hunter. He was the first player to get a sports contract. I remember his quote: "I've got to have a contract because I'm in a youth-oriented business." I thought, I'm in a youth-oriented business too. I was 30, the most famous model in the world, and I was the last of my era's famous models left. Verushka, Jean Shrimpton, Twiggy—they all had stopped. I read the article to my boyfriend and asked him how I could get a contract like that. He replied, "That's easy: refuse to do cosmetic ads." And that's what I did.

JJ: That was gutsy.

LH: I had 10 or 12 *Vogue* covers by this time; I knew my business. And I had always broken the rules. I was making \$400 a day—more than anyone else. That was because I had worked with a hairdresser, John Constantine, and I found out that his rate was \$400 a day. So I told the agency, "I'm upping my rate." They said, "You can't do that." I insisted. My second year modeling I had discovered that lingerie models were making \$200 to \$300 an hour, and what they were wearing provided more coverage than bikinis! But the industry hadn't caught up to the idea that the models in bikinis were more bare, and the bikini had been around for five years. So I called Rusty, my booker at Ford, and said, "Tell the catalogs I'll do lingerie ads for \$300 an hour." The "real" *Vogue* models didn't do catalog, despite the higher rates. So for six months I had it all to myself. It was different, catalog modeling, but I learned how to do it, and eventually everyone started doing it. Also, after my first year modeling, I took off one month—that was unheard of! The theory was that if a model took more than two weeks off, she would be forgotten. I went to Morocco—it was fabulous—but the word was that I had committed suicide! All because I was gone more than two weeks.

JJ: So once again, your unprecedented approach worked. Revlon gave you the contract.

LH: Yes, in 1974, the modeling world changed. Jerry Ford and my lawyer, Bob Montgomery, negotiated the deal for the first exclusive contract in modeling history. My day rate jumped from \$300 to \$1500 within three months, my income jumped to five times as much as the preceding year, and there was enormous publicity. I was on the cover of *Newsweek* and *Time*. Then Jerry Ford had a brilliant idea that tripled his income overnight. He raised the models' agency fee from ten percent to twenty percent and he invented the client fee.

JJ: I think it's the only industry where the agent takes from both sides. You really took modeling to a whole other level. What advice do you have for models who have done the groundwork, gotten themselves noticed, and are now working their way up to that level?

LH: Half of a model's job is diplomacy. Quite often there are bubbles



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of problems on set, and it's your job to find out what it is and pop it. Whatever tension is on set—the hairdresser who's in a nasty mood because his boyfriend just left him, the photographer who is being bossed around by the ad guys—can end up on your face. You may have several different jobs in a day with ten or twenty people at each—there's always going to be some problem. A lot of modeling is how much crap you can take. I became a specialist at comedic one-liners. And I never got sick. I never cancelled a job.

JJ: Who are some your favorite models today?

LH: Amber Valletta, who is definitely a genetic freak! She's good. She keeps growing and her face keeps changing. She's learning things; you can see it. I love Kate Moss. She has a timeless, classic face which can go from the 14th century to the 21st century. She's another one of these genetic freaks with an even face.

Almost all of us have extremely uneven faces, including me, but I learned enough about makeup and lighting to get away with it.

JJ: What are your other beauty secrets?

LH: In the last thirty-five years, I've trekked from the Himalayas to Africa to the Amazon. I've scuba-dived. I've gone dog-sledding in Sweden and Alaska—and this is serious action, you're driving, not riding! I've gone and lived with Pygmies. These experiences made my brain and my face change. I learned things other people weren't learning unless they were explorers or anthropologists. A million

extraordinary things happened to me every single day on these trips. I slept in a sleeping bag on the ground, with no makeup, no mirrors, and companions who were wearing leaves and had filed teeth, and I read tons of books. I always came back to New York refreshed and chafing at the bit. Also, I was never competitive with the other girls; it's self-defeating and makes you look ugly. I loved learning the history of the girls from all over; it was a sort of sorority and they were my pals. Beverly Johnson credits me with getting the first black model on the cover of *Vogue*. She came to the studio on a go-see and I was in the dressing room; Polly Mellon was there and Dick. I saw this unbelievably gorgeous girl and I said, "What are you shooting a cover of me for? Shoot her!" And they did!

JJ: Tell us about your makeup line.

LH: I'm coming out with a line called Good Stuff. I invented it back when I was 46 and looking for something for women my age. It's invisible makeup for older women who don't want to look made up, and for men and younger people too.

JJ: Do you have a favorite designer?

LH: Probably Armani, because he's a friend and a great designer. But I don't spend much money on clothes; I never did. When I was 30, the most expensive item I had was a blouse I bought for \$100. I wear jeans and T-shirts. ■