

AN INTERVIEW WITH LISA SONG SUTTON

An Oral History Conducted by Cecilia Winchell and Vanessa Concepcion

Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islander
Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
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University of Nevada Las Vegas

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Oral History Project

University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2020

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The recorded interview and transcript have been made possible through the generosity of a grant from the City of Las Vegas Commission for the Las Vegas Centennial and funding from private individuals and foundations. The Oral History Research Center enables students and staff to work together with community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives. The participants in this project thank University of Nevada Las Vegas for the support given that allowed an idea the opportunity to flourish.

The transcript received minimal editing that includes the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. In several cases photographic sources accompany the individual interviews with permission of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of Reflections: The Las Vegas Asian American and Pacific Islanders Oral History Project.

Claytee D. White
Director, Oral History Research Center
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PREFACE



“My goal with [pageantry] was: I just want to have as much impact as possible within the community, and then, self-servingly, it’s an amazing networking opportunity; you meet tons and tons of people, and so that’s what I did.”

Growing up both in a close family and the tight-knit community of Sierra Vista, Arizona, Lisa Song Sutton has always embraced her duties to those around her and exceeded expectations. After graduating from high school, she went to the University of Arizona for her undergraduate degree and later went on to law school in Miami. Throughout law school, she also pursued modeling work on the side to help put herself through school.

Since moving to Las Vegas in 2010, Sutton has not only practiced law in the business litigation and business bankruptcy areas but has also moved on to start four different businesses. She started her original venture, Sin City Cupcakes, with a friend she met while modeling, baking and making deliveries on the weekends, but has now since scaled up and scaled out, a business philosophy she brings to every project. While in Las Vegas, Sutton has also made her rounds in the pageantry circuit, winning Miss Nevada in 2014 and running on the public service platform of empowering women through face-to-face community care. While holding the title of Miss Nevada, Sutton did nearly five hundred community appearances over the course of eighteen months.

Throughout the interview, Sutton also touches on various other topics ranging from the cultural traditions and foods that she still holds close as well as her favorite things about living in Las Vegas. Her active and community-oriented lifestyle also pushed her to run for Congress during the 2020 election cycle and continue to accomplish many more things in the future.

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November 19, 2021

in Las Vegas, Nevada

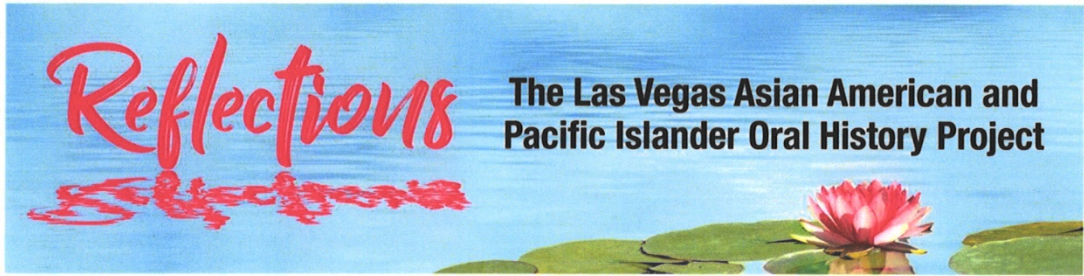
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Sutton describes her childhood in Sierra Vista, Arizona where her father worked at the Army Intelligence base. Her parents met in the ‘70s when her father was stationed in South Korea and they were both volunteering in the community. The town where she grew up in was very small and tight-knit, and gave her a strong sense of community. She discusses the unspoken expectations her parents had of her and how she believes they helped her live up to her potential. After graduating from high school, Sutton went to the University of Arizona for her undergraduate degree, then went to law school in Miami before finally settling down in Las Vegas in 2010.....1-7

Since moving to Las Vegas, Sutton has embarked on countless successful ventures. She first started out practicing law in the business litigation and business bankruptcy areas before co-founding four companies in Nevada across the food and beverage, real estate, ecommerce, and shipping industries. Her goal with each business has been to team up with operational partners so that they can scale up and scale out. Even before coming to Las Vegas, Sutton had a successful side hustle as a model throughout college, and while here she participated as a contestant in the Miss Nevada contest and won. She discusses her interest in pageantry as well as all of the community engagement opportunities involved.....7-16

Sutton touches on some of the cultural aspects of her Korean heritage that she still holds on to including Korean Thanksgiving, Chuseok, and the food that her mother cooks. She talks about her mother’s own journey in pageantry back in South Korea, and all the other ways she still finds to connect with her mother. Finally, Sutton recounts her experience running for Congress during the 2020 election cycle.....16-24



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Good morning. Today's date is November 19th, 2021. My name is Cecilia Winchell. I am here with...

Vanessa Concepcion.

Stefani Evans.

As well as Lisa Song Sutton.

Lisa, could you please spell your name for the record?

L-I-S-A, S-O-N-G, S-U-T-T-O-N.

Thank you. To start off, we would just like to ask you about your childhood; where you grew up; your parents; siblings; grandparents; anything like that.

I was born in Seoul, South Korea, and we moved to Sierra Vista, Arizona, which is a small rural town in southeastern Arizona, when I was five. Sierra Vista is connected to Fort Huachuca, which is an Army Intelligence base down in Arizona. My father was in the military, and so that's why we moved there. Luckily, I was able to grow up there through the rest of my childhood.



Are your parents of Korean citizenship or American?

My mom is Korean, and my father is American.

When did you move? What age were you?

I was five.

Do you have any memories of Korea?

Just a little bit. I was in pre-K, so we have a lot of VHS videos from classes, reading classes, and things like that, but I went to an American school to learn English, and then we made that transition to the States.

Do you have any memories of your grandparents?

Of my grandmother from my dad's side. My mom's parents had already passed by the time I was born, and my dad's dad had also passed by the time I was born. I was able to spend quite a bit of time with my grandmother, my dad's mom, and she passed away when I was nine.

Do you know how your parents met?

Yes. They met in the '70s. Actually, I have great photos that I'll show you guys. I have great photos from when they were dating. They look like "Mod Squad." It's very cute. Actually, it's really cute. They met volunteering in the community. My dad was helping run an archery gym for the American Boy Scouts on base, and my mom was really good at archery, and so they met while volunteering and hit it off.

What was it like growing up in Arizona?

I loved it. It's a very small town to this day. It's seventy miles southeast of Tucson, and it's forty miles north of the Mexican border, so it's really down in that southeast corner of the state, and it's right next to an Army base, so definitely a small-town feel. Everyone knows everyone. A very, very safe community from a crime perspective. There are just a handful of elementary

schools, two middle schools, and one high school, so all the families knew each other. We were very involved in our church when I was growing up as well, and so the same thing. All the families knew each other from church. You go to the same school as their kids. Very small, tight-knit community.

You stayed there for how long?

I was raised there all the way through high school. I finished high school there, and then I moved to Tucson to go to the University of Arizona.

Could you tell us about your later education and then what you did afterward?

I went to the University of Arizona for undergrad. I got a political science degree. Then I moved to Miami, and I went to law school in Miami. That was a lot of fun. I finished school, and then I moved to Las Vegas in 2010.

Why did you move to Las Vegas?

I wanted to be closer to my family because they were down in Arizona at the time. Miami, for as great as it was, it was so, so far. I looked West Coast-ish. I looked at L.A. I looked at Phoenix. I looked at Vegas. In 2010, especially moving from South Beach, the recession was here in Vegas; it was bottoming out, and so what an amazing place to move. Everything was half off, coming from South Beach, so that the rent and gas and groceries, everything was literally half off compared to the cost of living in Miami. I was like, let's give Vegas a try. I think a lot of people hear this story of, oh, I thought I would give Vegas a try for a couple of years, and then you end up staying and loving it.

What is your relationship like with your parents?

I'm very close to them. Unfortunately, my dad passed away last year, which was really upsetting, but I'm very, very close to my mom still, obviously, but close to my parents growing up,

certainly. I'm an only child, and so lots of great memories with them, and they were very, very involved in my childhood, academics, extracurricular activities, and we had lots of memories together as a family. I'm very, very close to my family.

Can you tell us about some of those memories?

Sure. I mean, just little things. We do a lot of stuff together as a family, but then I made great memories with both parents separately doing things that they enjoyed. My dad taught me how to shoot. He taught me how to hunt. He taught me how to fish. We would go do these things that we could just make those memories together just with us. My mom, she's an amazing cook. She makes incredible Korean food, and so certainly those memories of cooking with her.

We did a lot of family vacations. We did a lot of Disneyland, and we'd go up to Minnesota, which is where my dad's from, to go see his family up there. A lot of my mom's family that she's close to moved from South Korea to Dallas, Texas, and so same thing; we'd go to Dallas and visit her family over holidays and things like that. Just a lot of memories of family being together.

What kind of Korean food does your mom make a lot?

She can make it all. My favorite dishes that she makes is *sundubu*, which is a soft tofu soup. She makes great kimchi, of course. She makes great bulgogi. My favorite dish when I'm home, if I get to request, it would be *sundubu*, the soft tofu soup, and like a steam egg that she makes.

Nice. I want to go back to grad school. Why did you want to go to law school?

I think coming from high-achieving parents, it's required: You have to go to grad school. We had a joke in middle school. My dad was like, "You have to be a doctor to take care of me in my old age, or a lawyer to sue the SOB that doesn't." I was like, "Okay." I've always gravitated towards reading and writing; that's always come really naturally for me, and it's something I enjoy. We

decided pretty early on, like middle school age, that I was going to go to law school, and that was the trajectory that I was going to have. It was just a matter of where I wanted to go and how I wanted to do it. Knowing that I was going to go to grad school, I decided to stay in-state for college, have that totally paid for, so that way it would open up my options to go out of state for law school, and that's exactly what I did.

How did you feel about the pressure from your parents to go towards a high-achieving career?

It didn't even cross my mind to not do it. I think just growing up from early age and having high expectations set on me, it was just always a reminder that I'm capable. I didn't look at it as a negative of, why are you putting all this pressure on me? To me, I looked at it as like, well, you're encouraging me to do this because I am capable. From age five onward, I was in private piano lessons. I started flute lessons when I was nine. I had tap dance lessons. I was in every extracurricular. I did competitive music competitions all through middle school and high school. I think just having that experience of working hard, working towards a goal, those were patterns that were set up from a very early age, so it totally made sense for me to have career plans.

Do you know about the model minority myth?

Yes.

How do you feel about that? Do you feel like it's ever affected your life?

Obviously, you have these stereotypes that are rooted in truth. I think ultimately what it comes down to is family involvement. You have people are like, oh, well, Asians are just smarter. I don't think that's genetically true, but when you have such extreme family involvement and, again, that set of expectations—I don't think extreme pressure is good—but I do think that especially kids need structure, and we need encouragement, and we need a source of stability

that that comes from. And I think the fact that most Asian households generally—if not come from a nuclear family—at the very least there is a very strong either male or female presence, a mom or a dad that's a very strong presence within that family. I think that's where that encouragement comes from, and then you apply yourself, and if it's simply to please them alone, you do end up reaping benefits from that.

You came to Vegas in 2010. What were your initial impressions of the city?

Like I said, I was excited because I came from South Beach, which is very expensive, and I moved to the Strip; I moved to Vegas. I was like, I can't believe how affordable it is here. I started buying property in 2011. I bought my first house in Summerlin in 2011 because, again, it was just so affordable, so I was thrilled. I worked for a firm that still does business litigation and business bankruptcy. As you can imagine at that time, business was booming. We were so busy, and so I got a chance to learn so much about business being on that end of things.

How have you seen Vegas change in the decade you've been here?

It's grown tremendously, which is just really exciting to be part of, and it kind of creeps up on you. Everything from the Golden Knights, and now we have the Raiders. I can't even think of another major city where—can you imagine being in some major city before the New York Knicks got there, or before the Lakers arrived? You don't think about that as an opportunity, and yet that's exactly what we see here in Las Vegas. I just think it's exciting.

We're really the heart of the Mountain West, and I think that that's showing more and more in entrepreneurial ways. Not having state income tax, having relatively low corporate tax, those things are drivers for people wanting to move their businesses here, and/or wanting to start a business. I turned into an entrepreneur after working in that firm for a couple of years. If I lived in a New York, New Jersey, California where there are very, very high taxes and it's a very

barrier of entry to start a company, a lot of people think twice. They're like, well, I don't know if the juice is worth the squeeze; it's a lot to overcome right now. Those are actual barriers to being entrepreneurial. I love that Nevada is so business-friendly.



Could you tell us more about what you do in your job?

Yes. I have co-founded four companies in Nevada, and they're across several industries, food and beverage, real estate, ecommerce, and shipping, and I'm angel invested in several others, and I have a real estate portfolio here, mostly residential. I'm actually in escrow right now on two commercial buildings, but just continuing to expand my footprint here.



Could you tell us about your food and beverage business?

Yes. I have a company called Sin City Cupcakes, and we make alcohol-infused cupcakes. It's perfect for Vegas. It's a lot of fun.



What made you decide to start these businesses?

The first one was Sin City Cupcakes, and that was back in 2012. My cofounder with that, Danielle, she and I met in the modeling industry years ago now because I modeled all during college and law school. We just became great friends. Fast forward, I'm living in Vegas. I'm working my big-girl job at the law firm. She told me she had been making these alcoholic cupcakes. She was living in Florida. I was like, "That is genius. That is such a great idea. Vegas is the place. This is where people come to overspend, overindulge, buy new things they're not going to buy at home. This is the place."

I convinced her to move out here. I was like, “I’ll help you start the company.” I didn’t even know how to bake, but I was just like, “We’ll figure it out. I will help you, and we’ll make it happen.” That’s exactly what I did. I learned how to bake. Obviously, I’ve learned how to make our recipes. I was working at the firm full time, and nights and weekends I was baking and running deliveries and helping set up events. It was crazy. It was such a crazy time during startup mode, but it was so much fun.

Could you tell us more about...My question is escaping me.

SE: I have one. Tell us about your law firm. What kind of law do you practice?

I don’t practice anymore, but the firm that I used to be at still does business litigation and business bankruptcy.

VC: Could you also discuss more about your modeling throughout school? What was that like?

It was so fun. That was my side hustle. I had friends who were working as waitresses or bartending or whatever during school, and modeling was my side job. I was in school full time, and then I got a chance to model. Actually, being Asian American was really helpful in that sense because when I got out to Miami, there are so many beautiful women who live in South Beach, but back in 2006, there were literally no Asians. There were no Asian models that lived there.

I was able to work with Ford Models. Generally, they don’t take someone who is as small as I am for print work, but you have all these calendars that shoot down there, every calendar under the sun, every magazine under the sun at that time—Maxim, Sports Illustrated. This is 2006 until 2010. They all would shoot down in the Bahamas, Jamaica, the Caribbean, Miami, the Keys; that’s where they would always do their shoots, and so they would always need diversity,

so it was me and the half-Black girl that would get the bookings, and it was great. I had no competition. In contrast, if I went to school in L.A. where there are tons of Asians and Asian models for sure, I probably would have had a totally different experience. But being in Miami, I stood out in that regard, and it was such a positive thing because I got a ton of bookings and just met a ton of people, too. I met people I otherwise would have never met.



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Could you also tell us about your Miss Nevada journey?

Yes. The fall of 2013, my mom called me, and she was like, “Are you competing for Miss Las Vegas?” I was like, “I don’t know. I’m kind of busy. I just started a company.” She is like, “Well, you’re getting ready to age out.” Yes, it’s antiquated. The Miss America system, you age out at twenty-four; Miss USA, you age out at twenty-six at that time; and Miss United States,

you age out at twenty-nine. I was twenty-eight the fall of 2013, and so this was my last bite of the apple. This was my last chance to potentially win a state title and go to nationals.

I had to buckle down, and I hired a pageant coach. It was so serious. I was definitely the dark horse. The woman who was my first runner-up the year that I won was the first runner-up the previous year, so everyone said it was her time. She put in her dues, and she already knew the director and everything. It was just one of those things that because I knew it was my last year of eligibility, I'm like, if I'm meant to have this experience in my life, I'll win.

But you still have to work for it, so, like I said, I worked with a pageant coach, and he's crazy. I was the shortest contestant in my year, and that's a big deal in the pageant community. My coach was just like, "I don't know how we're going to do this." He was like, "We're going to have to really figure it out and get you some serious shoes." But we were strategic.

There are four areas of competition in the Miss United States organization: Interview, swimsuit, evening gown, and on-stage question. They're all weighted evenly, but the first time the judges meet you is in interview. This is a private interview before the show part, before swimwear and all that stuff later that evening. This is earlier in the day or sometimes the day before. It's a private interview. It's three minutes with each judge. They have your bio, and you have three minutes to wow them, get them excited about you, so that way it's human nature. Hopefully we hit it off in interview, and you're like, she's smart; she's going to work; I think she would be great. Then I come out that night in my swimsuit, and you're like, she looks great. The strategy was to get tens in interview and on-stage question, and get eights and nines in swimwear and evening gown, and also hope that the other contestants just don't do as well in interview because at that level, swimsuit and evening gown, one, it's subjective, and, two, everyone has been working hard to look great, so you're going to be pretty evenly matched, it's just going to

be what the judges like. Some judges love winners in white. Some judges love long hair, short hair, whatever. They just have preferences. That was the strategy, and I was able to win. It was crazy. Then the real work started, but it was so crazy to prepare.

How tall are you?

I am five-three.

Where does your interest in pageantry come from?

My mom had competed in Miss Korea. My babysitter growing up, her name is Diane, she went on to win Miss World in 2007. We're all from this small town in Arizona, but there have been six or seven pageant winners that have come out of Sierra Vista. It's weird. There was an article, I think in *The New York Times*, actually. It was years ago, and it was like, what's in the water in Sierra Vista, Arizona? Because you had all these women coming out and winning pageants.

I think just looking at it as another outlet certainly for community engagement, you learn very quickly how to speak in public because that's really what you're doing. After you win, I did nearly five hundred community appearances between Miss Las Vegas and Miss Nevada, eighteen months. It was crazy. It was so crazy. I was volunteering in schools, reading in hospitals, working for nonprofits. I did a whole Boys and Girls Club tour, the whole state. You have to know how to carry a room, how to speak to people, and really do it on the fly because you're not just walking on a stage in your swimsuit. That's such a small component of it. You're really out there doing community work.

Do you have any other family in Vegas as of right now?

No, it's just me. My mom said that she will move to Vegas when I get married and have kids, so I have to add that to the to-do list, obviously.

What do you enjoy most about living here?

There are so many things. Certainly, like I said, on the strategic side of things, like no state income tax here and things like that. I just love the lifestyle here. You have the Strip, which is this international destination, twenty-four-hour town, anything you want at any time. We literally have world-class food, world-class entertainment, world-class nightclubs, all these things that people come here for. Yet, it's one street of the whole city. You leave the Strip, and you have these great suburbs, and you have Chinatown, you have all these cool little places that make the city a city, and then you have rural Nevada. I was just in rural Nevada two weeks ago, and I was up at Pahrangat National Wildlife Refuge, which is only seventy miles north of here. It's an easy day trip. There are two huge lakes. The last time I was up there, I saw bald eagles. It's stunning. It's so beautiful. Yet, like I said, we're in this place where it's literally an international destination. We have a great airport. We can get a direct flight pretty much anywhere. Yet, it has a small-town feel. If you're a local, especially if you're in business, or you're in these other industries that get smaller and smaller as you get into each industry, it's a small local community.

You mentioned a church earlier. Do you still practice religion?

Kind of. Growing up I went to church every Sunday. I was raised Catholic. I went to church every Sunday. Now I don't go as often as I feel like I should, which is probably that Catholic guilt talking. I go sporadically. I've been trying to make more effort to go, and I go to St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church downtown. I really like that one. It's very modest, super, super modest. It's not like the big fancy Summerlin churches. It's super modest, so I like that better.

Do you still partake in any AAPI cultural celebrations?

Yes. I was on the board of the Asian Community Development Council for six years, and they do great work here. Certainly, we were part of everything, all the things, but Lunar New Year

and Chuseok, which is Korean Thanksgiving. My mom has a giant party at the house. It's crazy. It's nuts. It's so much fun.

How strongly connected do you feel to your Asian American identity?

I feel very connected to it. I was the first Miss Nevada of Asian descent, and so that was really exciting. I didn't run on that, and I didn't even realize that at the time, but the day after I won, I think there was a *Buzzfeed* article or something, it was on Twitter. We're just like, that's cool. Yes, I think there are so many ways to continue to stay connected to your heritage. I think it's really important to do that.

Have you ever experienced any racially discriminatory practices against you, or heard from others?

I can't think of a specific instance that I feel like was rooted from me being Asian. I've definitely been in discriminatory environments because I'm a young woman, or a young woman in business, certainly, or because I look younger than I am. That's happened many times where you just come in underestimated and comments are made or whatever it is, and then you really just have to work doubly hard. I feel like that's been more of a problem than anything else. I can't recall a specific instance.

VC: I was just curious. You discussed so many things that you're involved in. How do you manage to get involved in so many different types of businesses, and what does the day normally look like for you in Vegas?

I don't do anything alone. I have operational partners in everything that I do, and that's always been my goal with the businesses that I have is to team up with operational partners, and we put together great processes, great staff, great procedures, and then the goal is always to scale up and scale out. I don't want to buy myself another job. I have no problem grinding in the beginning.

The first three and a half years of Sin City Cupcakes, I literally was baking, running deliveries, I was doing everything with Danielle and with our staff. I don't want to do that forever. Now fast forward, we're going on ten years of business. I haven't baked in seven years, which is better for everybody. Now we've scaled and we can hire people who have pastry degrees, we can hire people who are far better at that than I am, and so that allows me to be available for high-level strategy, be a good spokesperson for the company, help drive business. I should be out there getting more business every time that I'm out talking to people, and I'm also available for escalation even at our shipping stores. Again, in the beginning, I was working the counter, working the store. Now I'm probably in every other Saturday just to get eyes on the store and so staff knows that I'm around. But I'm available for escalation. If you get some crazy customer who is really upset over whatever, our staff doesn't have to get yelled at. They can say, "Our owner will call you back," and then I'll deal with it. That for me has always been the goal to have multiple streams of income coming in from different sources, and then scale up and scale yourself out of the business eventually.



VC: *You mentioned the Korean Thanksgiving. Is that soon, or has it passed already?*

Chuseok already passed, yes. My mom usually has a giant party at her house with her friends, and they all make a ton of food and bring a ton of food, and it's an excuse for them to drink and gamble at the same time and eat. They play this red tile card game. It's just fun. It's a fun atmosphere. Of course, there is a serious karaoke machine, a very expensive karaoke machine. Somehow a tambourine appears. You are just like, where did you buy this? Where did you get this tambourine? Where is it from? The whole point is to gather, to gather with friends and family and enjoy each other.

SE: *Could you tell us about the food at this Thanksgiving celebration?*

So much food. Bulgogi and japchae, obviously kimchi and all different types of kimchi as well, different soups. They'll have a grill on to do Korean tacos. We call them little Korean tacos because they'll use lettuce, and just wrap up meat and rice in there and some gochujang, which is like a hot pepper paste. Just a ton of food. Mondu, which is like wontons, basically. Just a ton of food.

SE: *That sounds so good.*

It's so good. It's so much. Then if you have a Korean mom, she is like, "Why are you eating so much?" And you're like, "You loaded up my plate." She'll make a comment about how much you're eating, and you're like, "You literally made me a second plate; I saw you."

It's here.

Yes, yes. "You made it. Did you black out and not remember?" Yes, my mom is crazy. She is wild.

You talked about the public speaking aspect of the pageant. What was your platform?

My public service platform was empowering women through face-to-face community care. We left it kind of generic so that I could work with all kinds of nonprofits instead of just being, “I’m going to eradicate domestic violence.” And that’s a great goal. I wanted to make sure that I was going to be available to as many nonprofits as I could, and I did quite a bit with Shade Tree and these more...it’s heavier, it’s heavier work. We did stuff with the jail. You do some heavy work within that, but then you also get a really light side, which is all the stuff with kids, Nevada Reading Week, like I said, doing the Boys and Girls Club tour, doing stuff with Nevada SPCA, doing stuff with puppies and getting them adopted. You do get a fun, light side to it, too.

That was for one year that you were...?

Miss Las Vegas was my local title, and I had that for about six months prior to the state pageant, and then once I won the state pageant, that’s a one-year commitment, so it was eighteen months total that I just had my foot on the gas in trying to do as much community work as I could with that title.

How did that title then help you going forward?

I can’t even quantify how helpful it was. Actually, I did a TED talk about this, and it’s about community engagement [<https://youtu.be/pPbXy4FBk>]. I was physically away from my companies. Before competing, I went to my business partners, and I said, “This is what I want to do, and if I win, which is the goal, this is the type of year that I want to have with it.” Every girl has a different journey, and some girls really want to get a modeling contract, and they really want to become an actress and that’s their career trajectory in winning, and that’s perfectly fine. But for me, because I was already twenty-eight, I had already had a modeling career, I had already finished grad school, I was a working professional, plus I had started a company and I was already a business owner by then. I was just in such a different place in my life than I would

have been at twenty-two competing. My goal with it was: I just want to have as much impact as possible within the community, and then, self-servingly, it's an amazing networking opportunity; you meet tons and tons of people, and so that's what I did. My business partners were on board. They were super excited. I was physically away from my companies; and yet, they were all doing really well. Revenues were increased, and it was because I was out meeting people, and they'd ask me, "What else do you do besides this whole Miss Nevada thing?" And then I could talk about cupcakes or real estate or whatever was appropriate. It just really ingratiated me in the community, and I got a chance to meet so many people.



BEAUTY
her picks

Play to SLAY

By Emmy Kasen
Photography by Eva Simon

When you spend time with 33-year-old entrepreneur and former Miss Nevada Lisa Song Sutton, you wonder if there is anything she can't do. The former model, TEDx speaker, philanthropist and writer landed in Las Vegas after having a "quarter-life crisis" after finishing law school in Miami. "I went from living at the Flamingo in South Beach to moving to Slay on the Strip in 2010," she says. Through handling business litigation and bankruptcies at a Vegas law firm, she got a crash course in business. She soon co-founded Sin City Cupcakes as a side hustle in 2011, and her trajectory climbed from there. Sutton is now the co-founder for at least five companies and an investor in ventures that include real estate, tech and fashion. What makes this powerhouse and former-pageant queen feel beautiful? Instead of lounging at a spa or donning a designer wardrobe, the self-professed list-maker views accomplishment. "I feel the most beautiful when I know I've had a full productive day. When I check off all my boxes and finish my to-do list, I feel complete."

"I use all Shiseido skincare products. My mom is Korean, and she pushed that all on me in high school. I apply the sunscreen under foundation, of course."
Urban Environment Oil-Free UV Protector SPF 42, \$35, shiseido.com

"I really like the L'Oréal mechanical pencil eyeliner. It's really thin, and it stays put all day."
Infallible Never Fail eyeliner, \$9, lorealparisusa.com

"Eve Dawes did custom lipstick and lip gloss for me. She makes it right there in 20 minutes."
Dawes Custom Cosmetics, from \$35, dawescustomcosmetics.com

"Sundays are my day off, and I'll run to Good Foot in Chinatown for a massage. I like to get in and get out."
60-minute full-body massage \$20, Good Foot Spa, 4545 W. Spring Mountain Road, 792.220.8188

"When I have time for a mani and pedi, I go to Kyou Beauty Salon in Chinatown. There is a super talented nail tech there named Jessica who does Japanese nail art. I don't do it often, but when I have the time, that's where I go."
Japanese nail art from \$39, Kyou Beauty Salon, 4009 Spring Mountain Road, 702.272.2233, kyoubeautysalon.com

You've talked about the food that your mom makes. Does she have recipes for those?

Nothing is written—we've talked about this, actually—yes, nothing is written down. But there is no measurement to it. She just eyeballs everything, and she tastes it, and then eyeballs it again.

You've tried following her around, and it's impossible.

Yes, we've tried. I was like, "We should write down a recipe." And she's like, "There is no recipe." I'm like, "Okay." We have cooked side by side where I have literally just replicated what she's doing, and it still doesn't taste the same. There is something about the way moms cook. Her way is the way you know that it tastes. No, unfortunately, there are no formal recipes, but I've gotten, just on a few things, enough muscle memory to eyeball it myself. But, yes, she is a phenomenal cook. She learned from her mom in the same fashion. There was no recipe. Her mom would eyeball everything.

You were born in Seoul. Is that where your mom was from as well?

Yes. My mom was born in Incheon and grew up there. Now there's an airport and all these things, but at that time, when she was growing up, it was a very small farming community.

VC: You mentioned your mom was Miss Korea. Did she ever share any memories about that that you could speak of?

Oh yes, we have all kinds of photos. We have tons of photos, tons of photos. She is very proud of that time, of course. All the community work that's involved. You're a spokesmodel, right? At that time, in the '70s, it was more geared towards a modeling contract and becoming a singer or a performer; that was the trajectory for it. Again, you met so many people, and that's why...there were a lot of reasons why she wanted me to compete, but one of them certainly was that she was like, "It's going to force you to meet a ton of people. You're going to meet people you just wouldn't meet otherwise."

And she had had that experience in Korea.

Yes.

She is still in Arizona, right?

Yes.

Are any of her relatives in Arizona?

No. They're in Korea, and they're in Dallas. We see the Dallas family pretty often, at least once a year we'll take a thing. They talk often as well. Having been down there for so long, my parents were very much part of the community between the church and businesses and real estate investments and just really being part of that community. It's such a small place, so it's easy to be a big fish in a small pond there, and so she is comfortable there. Her friends are there. There is a Korean Catholic Church community down there, so that's her group of friends. She has a hair salon, and so she has had clients for almost twenty years, the same clients.

You mentioned that they have real estate investments as well. You're kind of following what they've done.

Yes, certainly.

With your different income streams.

Yes, exactly. They had that model down, and now my mom is exiting a lot of their Arizona portfolio and buying here in Nevada, which, of course, I'm doing all for free because I have to, so it's fine. But, yes, it's the nature of the beast.

Just another...

Yes, here are some more things to do, exactly, because I am so bored and have so much time on my hands.

And here is another commission that I won't get.

Oh, one hundred percent. I'm like, "Mom..." Everything is fine, right? I can't complain.

How many siblings does your mom have?

She had nine brothers. Yes, she had nine brothers. There were probably four that she was closest with, and then the wife of her eldest brother became matriarch of the family, and she lives in Dallas. Her children are closer in age to my mom, so they're like siblings to her even though technically they are her nieces and nephew. They're more like siblings because they're closer in age. Yes, she had a huge family, but they lived on a farm, so they had to have this huge family to do all the things.

Have you been back to Korea?

I have, yes. Most recently—it's actually been a whole year. My mom goes back pretty much every year. The last time I was back was maybe four years ago. A really fun trip that we did, this was 2009. I'm still living in Miami. It was right before I moved to Vegas. I have a cousin. He opened up a nightclub in Seoul in 2009. This is when the James Bond movie had come out, so they did this huge party with Heineken as a sponsor. It was so much fun. It was just crazy. Yes, I love Korea. Seoul is amazing. I have a good time there.

Is there anything we haven't asked you that you hoped we would that you wanted to talk about?

The screenshot shows a DailyWire article titled "Former Miss Nevada, Daughter Of Immigrant, Launches GOP Congressional Bid" by Ryan Saavedra, dated September 8, 2019. The article features two photos of Lisa Song Sutton, one as Miss Nevada and one in a black and white dress. The text below the photos states: "Lisa Song Sutton, a business owner and former Miss Nevada United States, has launched a congressional bid as a Republican for Nevada's 4th Congressional District."

The flyer is for a fundraising reception hosted by Joe Desimone in support of Lisa Song Sutton for Congress. It is a Republican candidate for Nevada's 4th Congressional District. The event is on Monday, September 30th, from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM at the Home of Joe Desimone, 308 Rosegate Ave, Henderson NV 89052. The suggested personal contribution is \$500. Checks should be payable to Lisa Song Sutton for Congress at 4375 N. Las Vegas Blvd, Suite 7-201, Las Vegas, NV 89115. RSVP to Charles Gallagher at 702-506-3782 or charles@ten31nv.com. The flyer also includes a disclaimer about the maximum amount an individual can contribute (\$2,000 per election) and that contributions are not tax-deductible for federal income tax purposes.

This flyer is for a fundraising reception for Lisa Song Sutton for Congress. The event is on Thursday, November 21st, from 4:00 PM to 6:30 PM at T-Bones Chophouse at Red Rock Casino, 11011 W. Charleston Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89135. Hosts include Doug Ansell, Eve & Lewis Dawes, Joe DeSimone, Colin Fukunaga, Dr. H.L. Greenberg, The Honorable Becky Harr, Lori & Ron Montoya, Mark Shunock & Cheryl Daro, Jack & Jill Stillwell, and Ernie Becker V. The suggested contribution is \$250 per person. Checks should be payable to Lisa Song Sutton for Congress at 4375 N. Las Vegas Blvd., Suite 7-201, Las Vegas, NV 89115. RSVP to Charles Gallagher at 702-506-3782 or charles@ten31nv.com. The flyer also includes a disclaimer about the maximum amount an individual can contribute (\$2,000 per election) and that contributions are not tax-deductible for federal income tax purposes.

No. I really came in not knowing what to expect, so I was just happy to chat and share. I think we pretty much covered—I ran for congress in 2020, during the 2020 cycle.

Let's talk about that.



That was crazy pants. That was an incredible experience. Interestingly, kind of similar to the pageant experience in the sense that you're out, you're out talking to people, talking to voters, you're out talking to people. You can't be shy. The 2020 cycle was just bonkers, crazy, and so it was a really incredible experience. I ended up losing in the primary, but as disappointing as that was—I lost in June of 2020—my dad got diagnosed with cancer in August. Had I won, I would have been full steam ahead to the general election in November. My parents were so proud of me that I was running, and my dad in particular. He was convinced I was going to save America. I

think he would have hid a lot of stuff from me, to be honest, of just how he was doing and how sick he was.

So you wouldn't worry.

Exactly. And I would have lost that time with him because I would have been up here campaigning. He got diagnosed August of 2020. I was doing four days down and three days up, literally it was rotation, between here and Arizona. He passed in October. I would have lost that time for sure. It all works out in God's timing, definitely.

Thank you for that.

Yes. Thank you. Thank you so much.

This has been great. I appreciate your time.

[End of recorded interview]