

Sleep Comfort Takes Wing

NYC/ITALY INVENTOR-ENTREPRENEUR'S TRAVEL SLEEPWEAR COMBINES FASHION AND FUNCTION **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

I'M OFTEN contacted on social media by inventors with newly released products. Although every invention is “unique,” here is a combo product that’s really useful for travel.

Zipped up, it looks like an eye mask. Unzipped, it’s both a warm and comfy stretch beanie hat, as well as a sleep mask. Inventor Lauren Lombardo fills us in.

Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): Tell us about yourself and your background.

Lauren Lombardo (LL): I’m an artist, entrepreneur, inventor, event planner and self-published children’s book author and illustrator from New York City. I’m the second oldest of five children in a family deeply rooted in Italian traditions.

I’m also an Italian dual citizen, splitting my time between Italy and New York. My heritage and upbringing have shaped my passions for art, culture and travel. Having lived in inspiring places like Rome, Sorrento, Naples and parts of Spain, I’ve drawn on these experiences to fuel my creativity and entrepreneurial pursuits.

In 2021, I earned my MBA in Entrepreneurship while introducing The Butterfly Hat to the world. Now based in New

York, I’m focused on expanding on my vision for The Butterfly Hat.

EGT: Had you invented anything before The Butterfly Hat?

LL: The Butterfly Hat is my first patented invention (U.S. Patent No. 11,191,672). Before this, I started open-to-the-public painting workshops in New York City and Italy. Being an event planner and children’s book author and illustrator allowed me to hone my creativity and problem-solving skills, ultimately leading to the creation of this innovative product.

Growing up, I designed my own gowns and dresses and would have them made, so to me, this is nothing out of the ordinary. When God gives me an idea, I go for it!

EGT: What’s the story behind The Butterfly Hat?

LL: The Butterfly Hat was inspired by my experiences as a frequent traveler. Each winter, I’d return to New York City to visit my grandmother, Betty, for her birthday. The brand name Betty and Bradley honors my family home on Bradley Avenue, built by our Sicilian immigrant family.

This magical home, with its garden and brook, was a sanctuary for creativity. My grandmother kept a butterfly sun-catcher in the window, which I took with me to Italy as a symbol of home.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BUTTERFLY HAT

“Growing up, I designed my own gowns and dresses and would have them made, so to me, this is nothing out of the ordinary. When God gives me an idea, I go for it!” —LAUREN LOMBARDO

As someone who wanted to look stylish while sleeping on the go, I envisioned something compact, fashionable and comfortable. The idea of merging a beanie with an eye mask took shape, and through persistence and creativity The Butterfly Hat evolved into the patented design it is today.

EGT: What problem does this invention solve?

LL: The Butterfly Hat provides a stylish and practical solution for comfortable rest on the go.

Unlike traditional travel sleepwear, it complements your wardrobe while offering personal space and comfort. Perfect for travelers, night-shift workers, and anyone seeking rest in busy environments, it protects your head from shared surfaces, blocks light and overhead vents, and provides gentle compression for a soothing feel. It's as functional as it is fashionable.

EGT: Did you hand-sew the original prototype? How many attempts did it take to perfect?

LL: Yes! My seventh grade sewing classes came in handy. I was able to create the original prototype and took photos along the way.

Once the concept was clear, I took it to a professional seamstress, where it took several iterations over a few years to strike the perfect balance of style, functionality and comfort.

EGT: What was your patenting experience?

LL: The process was rigorous but incredibly rewarding, teaching me the value of perseverance and protecting one's ideas. I worked closely with the USPTO and my patent examiner. Writing it myself is something I will always be proud of.



EGT: Are you manufacturing in the United States? If so, how has that worked out?

LL: The Butterfly Hat is manufactured in the United States and overseas. While the process has presented challenges, I'm committed to ensuring high quality and supporting local production where possible.

As with anything, it takes lots of patience and thinking outside the box. This product was never made before, so naturally you have to stay on top of the entire process and use really good communication and visuals.

EGT: Any aspirations for “Shark Tank”? Have you crowdfunded?

LL: I've considered pitching The Butterfly Hat on “Shark Tank” to amplify its reach. While I haven't crowdfunded yet, it's an avenue I may explore to connect with supporters of innovative products.

EGT: Have you had any help with PR?

LL: To date, The Butterfly Hat has gained momentum primarily through word of mouth. It also received exposure on “Snake Oil” with David Spade and Christie Brinkley, where it was featured as a real product. The show highlighted its benefits for travelers and women who like to cover their hair while sleeping.

I would love to mention as well that The Butterfly Hat was recently nominated for best accessory from the Fashion Group International Rising Star awards for South Florida.

Lauren Lombardo conceived The Butterfly Hat because she wanted to look stylish while sleeping on the go with a product that is compact and comfortable.



The Butterfly Hat also protects your head from shared surfaces, blocks light and overhead vents, and provides gentle compression for a soothing feel.

EGT: Do you have any new products or styles in the works?

LL: Yes, I'm expanding The Butterfly Hat line with new styles and materials to cater to a wider audience, especially for kids and teens. I'm also working on other travel essentials designed to enhance comfort on the go.

EGT: Have you had any mentors to guide you during past obstacles?

LL: While I've learned from other inventors and their journeys, I've also faced unique challenges that required me to find my own path. The guidance I've received along the way has been invaluable in helping me stay focused on my goals.

One mentor I will never forget is QVC Italia's host, Stefano Marescotti, who was preparing The Butterfly Hat for launch on QVC Italia. He passed during COVID, and his enthusiasm and encouragement are something that will always keep me motivated.

EGT: What are your 5-year goals?

LL: My vision is to establish The Butterfly Hat as a globally recognized brand. I aim to expand its reach by introducing new product lines and continuing to innovate in the travel and comfort accessory space.

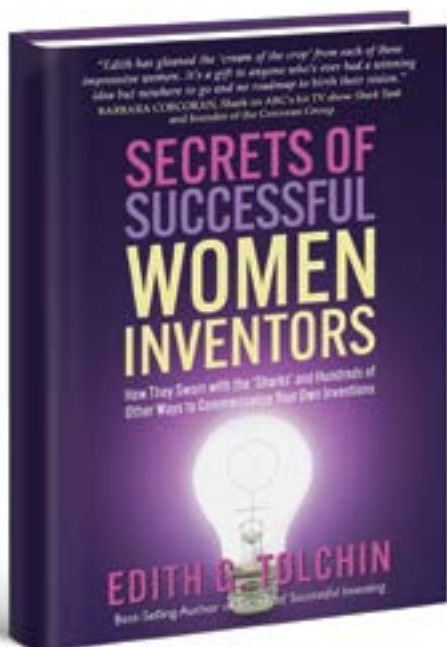
I plan to have The Butterfly Hat featured in airports worldwide and included in in-flight amenity kits for business and first-class passengers, promoting comfort and wellness during travel. Additionally, I see it as a perfect fit for hospital gift shops, resorts and cruise lines, offering stylish and practical solutions for on-the-go comfort in diverse settings. 🐛

Details: thebutterflyhat.com; bettyandbradley.com

Edith G. Tolchin has written for *Inventors Digest* since 2000 (edietolchin.com/portfolio). She is the author of several books, including "Secrets of Successful Women Inventors" (<https://a.co/d/fAGlvZJ>) and "Secrets of Successful Inventing" (<https://a.co/d/8dafJd6>).



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Edith G. Tolchin
(photo by Amy Goldstein Photography)

Edith G. Tolchin knows inventors!

Edie has interviewed over 100 inventors for her longtime column in *Inventors Digest* (www.edietolchin.com/portfolio). She has held a prestigious U.S. customs broker license since 2002. She has written five books, including the best-selling *Secrets of Successful Inventing* (2015), and *Fanny on Fire*, a recent finalist in the Foreword Reviews INDIE Book Awards.



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