



Ellen Travolta, a native of New Jersey now calls Coeur d'Alene her home

Getting to Know Ellen

WHEN ELLEN TRAVOLTA first visited North Idaho in 1989, she knew that she had discovered the place where she wanted to start a new life. The visit to Coeur d'Alene—encouraged by a friend and fellow actor—began the transformation for Ellen from a Los Angeles-based actor to a genuine Northwest woman.

She settled in North Idaho in 1994. "I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the area and over the years we have seen for ourselves that the people here have

a real passion for life," Ellen said. She is impressed with how people are committed to both their families and the community. "I love the beat of the drum people follow." She also added with a laugh, "It's nice to live in a community where every other person hasn't had a facelift."

Today Ellen shares a home in Coeur d'Alene with her husband of 23 years, actor Jack Bannon. Her son and daughter and two of her three grandchildren also live in the area. Ellen's home is her sanctuary and the North Idaho landscape is her playground. "I love to cook, walk, bike, and just enjoy being home with

Jack," Ellen said. Their home has also become a gathering place for family and friends. It has been a tradition for Ellen and Jack to host readings at home during the holidays. "We love inviting people to read a good book or share some poetry." Ellen graciously extended this activity to the community when she volunteered to read the "Night Before Christmas" at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture during Campbell House Holidays.

Ellen has settled comfortably into her life in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to performing on the stage of the Coeur d'Alene Summer Theatre, she also has become involved in the community. She can be seen each year on Friday at Art on the Green in Coeur d'Alene. "I always work in the chicken sandwich booth. Jack helps cook and I take the money so I can talk to people who visit."

Ellen was born in Englewood, New Jersey along with her two sisters and three brothers. Her father, Salvatore Travolta, was a semi-professional football player and owned a tire shop with his brother. Her mother, Helen, was an actress and singer before her marriage, performing with the Sunshine Sisters, a radio vocal group, and an actor and director before becoming a high school drama teacher. "I remember going to lots of plays to see my mother when I was little," Ellen said. "Acting was our hobby growing up in New Jersey. We had a special area in the basement to perform and we loved to do imitations of our neighbors." A true entertainment family, Ellen and all her siblings—Ann, Margaret, John, Sam and Joey—have acting credits to their names.

Ellen's career as a stage, movie and television actor started as a young girl on local television and when she appeared in her high school plays. After attending Carnegie Mellon University on a scholarship, she worked on stage in New York and toured on the road. Ellen took a 10 year break to raise her children and then returned to acting and made her television debut in a 1976 episode of *Medical Center*, followed quickly by an episode of *All in the Family*. She has appeared in several movies including *Grease* with her brother John, *The Basket*, and *Elvis*. Ellen's numerous television credits include *General Hospital*; *Welcome Back Kotter*, again with brother John, two roles

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as the mother of Scott Baio - in *Happy Days*/*Joannie Loves Chachi*, in *Charles in Charge* and once again in *Charles in Charge* in a 3 part series.

A stage actress to the core, Ellen’s ties to the local theatre started in 1990 when the Coeur d’Alene Summer Theatre moved to its new location at North Idaho College. “I remember when we had 300 people in the audience and today we pack the house,” Ellen said. Over the years Ellen has appeared on the Coeur d’Alene stage many times and this summer she and her husband Jack appeared in *Pippin*.

In September Eastern Washington and North Idaho audiences will have an opportunity to see Ellen on the Interplayers

Theatre stage in the role of diner owner Grace in *Bus Stop*. Joining her and an ensemble cast will be her husband Jack. “I played Grace before and always wanted to do it again differently,” Ellen said. “Interplayers is a perfect venue for *Bus Stop* because of its intimate environment. In addition to working with my husband, I am excited about the mix of local talent and some new blood that will be on stage for this performance.”

A distinctive American classic comedy written by William Inge, *Bus Stop* opened on Broadway in 1955. It was a critical success and went on to become a major motion picture starring Marilyn Monroe in 1956. Based on Inge’s one-act play, *People in the Wind*, *Bus Stop* focuses on the

relationships formed between bus passengers stranded at a roadside diner outside of Kansas City during a snowstorm. The play highlights a budding romance between a nightclub chanteuse and a headstrong cowboy, as well as the poignant lives of the others waiting out the storm. *Bus Stop* at Interplayers will be directed by Scott Allan Smith and is scheduled September 14th – October 1st.

Ellen’s performance in *Bus Stop* is just another step in a full life as an accomplished actor. But her heart is focused on her role as wife, mother, grandmother, friend and our Northwest Woman.

For more info on “*Bus Stop*” dates and times please visit www.interplayers.com