



Ellen: The Real Story of Ellen DeGeneres

By Kathleen Tracy

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All Ellen DeGeneres wanted to be was funny. She kept her humor clean and steered clear of politics and social agendas, instead honing a quirky, off-center, mistrustful view of the world.

I was coming home from kindergarten--well, they told me it was kindergarten. I found out later I had been working in a factory for ten years. It's good for a kid to know how to make gloves.

If ever there was a more unlikely comic to become a symbol of controversy, it was Ellen DeGeneres. Throughout her career, she balanced her ever-growing success with her desire to keep her sexuality private. How that struggle affected her life and career and ultimately inspired her to come out of the closet, putting her life in the spotlight and her career at considerable risk, forms the emotional core of this biography. And in a broader sense, the controversy caused by Ellen's acknowledged sexuality is a reflection of America's own struggle with tolerance and acceptance.

Ellen examines the repercussions still being felt by the comic as a direct result of her revelations and offers a glimpse of what her future may hold. It details:

Ellen's colorful family history, which includes a swashbuckling pirate ancestor

How her conservative father turned his back on Ellen when he learned she was gay

The personal tragedy that became her greatest inspiration

Her secret life in the gay bar scene during her stand-up days

The women Ellen has loved

Her life as a gay crusader

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This star bio by entertainment journalist Tracy qualifies as the "real" story of Ellen DeGeneres. The book traces her life from her mother's first and subsequent marriages to the cancellation of *Ellen* in 1998. Avoiding juicy speculation, Tracy focuses on the mundane details of DeGeneres's crowning as the "funniest person in America" in 1982 and her rise to sitcom fame and failure in the 1990s. Allegations of ego struggles surface in the multiple firings and cast restructuring following *Ellen*'s premiere, but Tracy remains neutral, offering both sides and allowing readers to choose. There is nothing remarkable in this story of a woman caught between studio bias and her own self-defeating actions, but we are left with an awareness of DeGeneres's enduring humor and a hope that she will return to television soon. Most public libraries will want to add this to their collection of celebrity biographies. AKelli N. Perkins, Herrick P.L., Holland, MI
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From [Booklist](#)

"Ellen DeGeneres never set out to be anybody's advocate for social tolerance, nor the standard-bearer for gays on television," says Tracy. However, massive cast changes and a title change in the second season transformed DeGeneres' show. Finishing thirteenth in the ratings, "Ellen had reason to feel optimistic." But she wanted to bring in more female writers to "get into a woman's head exactly and write it from that perspective." She was also concerned with "finding a consistent voice for her character, which at times still exuded a vagueness that translated into a feeling that something was missing." A San Francisco critic identified the missing something in a piece headed "The Sitcom That Does Not Speak Its Name," which concluded that seeing *Ellen*'s character as a lesbian would help a scattered sitcom make sense but could keep the show from being a bigger hit because the "pressure to be a role model, . . . coupled with the inevitable conservative protests, might squeeze the life out of an up-front *Ellen*." (But was it conservative protests that killed the show--or lack of laughs?) Tracy dishes up the details, including DeGeneres' father's reaction to her coming out, as well as tidbits from our *Ellen*'s tawdry past in this comprehensive look at all things DeGeneres, which complements Betty DeGeneres' *Love Ellen: A Mother/Daughter Journey* (unavailable for review). *Mike Tribby*

About the Author

KATHLEEN TRACY was a portrait photographer for 10 years before she became a photojournalist and professional author. Her work has been included in A&E Biography, KidScreen, and Television International. She is the author of more than 20 books.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gerald James:

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