

## Interview: Claudia Wells is the Original Jennifer in 'Back to the Future'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 26, 2010 - 2:37pm

- [Back to the Future](#) [2]
- [Christopher Lloyd](#) [3]
- [Claudia Wells](#) [4]
- [George Clooney](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Interview](#) [7]
- [Lea Thompson](#) [8]
- [Marty McFly](#) [9]
- [Michael J. Fox](#) [10]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [11]
- [Robert Zemeckis](#) [12]

CHICAGO – The classic film “Back to the Future” celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, and the original cast – including Claudia Wells as Jennifer – will be introducing the film this weekend at the Hollywood Palms and Hollywood Blvd Cinema in suburban Chicago.

Claudia Wells has become a footnote in film history. She became one of the 1980s most wanted “girlfriends” with her role as Jennifer, Marty McFly’s (Michael J. Fox) main squeeze in the memorable film, but had to forego the part in the sequels due to a personal family matter (Elisabeth Shue played Jennifer in the subsequent films). But Wells has no regrets, her decision to leave acting led her into owning and running Armani Wells, a highly regarded Los Angeles men’s fashion store.



Power of Love: Claudia Wells, Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd on Set

Photo credit: © Universal Pictures Home Entertainment

Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com talked with Claudia Wells about her extraordinary connection with ‘Back to the Future,’ during a photo session with photographer Joe Arce. She will be introducing the film with fellow co-stars Christopher Lloyd (Doc Brown), Lea Thompson (Lorraine) and James Tolkán (Principal Strickland) at the Hollywood Blvd Cinema in Woodridge (Illinois) and the Hollywood Palms in Naperville on February 26th, 27th and 28th.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** How did you develop an interest in professional acting? And how did you get your first job?

**Claudia Wells:** I wanted to be an actress since I could remember, even when I was two years old. I used to cry to my mother as a toddler because I didn’t think I was small enough to fit into the television [laughs]. I started performing children’s performing roles in opera when I was eight in San Francisco. I did whatever modeling and acting I could in San Francisco, and then I convinced my mother to move to Los Angeles between grade school and high school so I could become an actress.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You did several guest spots on some memorable TV shows of the 1980s – 'Fame,' 'Trapper John,' 'Simon & Simon' come to mind – do you have any memories of any of these shows that stand out?

**Wells:** I was on 'Simon & Simon' during Gerald McRaney's directorial debut, portraying a girl who ended up getting involved in drugs and was a runaway, so it was very dramatic and fabulous. I did a TV movie called 'Babies Having Babies,' an ABC Afterschool Special, and it was Martin Sheen's directorial debut, which was an extraordinary experience. I was working all the time and with great people, and that was a blessing.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What were your circumstances in landing the part of Jennifer in 'Back to the Future'?

**Wells:** I was contracted to a sitcom with Ed Asner called 'Off the Rack,' but it looked like ABC-TV wasn't going to pick it up for the fall. At the same time, I auditioned and got the part in 'Back to the Future.' ABC changed their mind and did pick up 'Off the Rack' for six episodes. Even though I had Ed Asner behind me to do both, ABC wouldn't let me out of the commitment. So I had to then decline Back to the Future, and they cast it with another actress [Melora Halin].

The film shot for eight weeks with Eric Stolz, while I did the six episodes for the sitcom. When 'Back to the Future' replaced the Marty McFly character with Michael J. Fox, the girl they had cast after me was five-foot-seven, too tall to play Marty's girlfriend. So I got my part back [laughs]. It was meant to be.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Did you and rest of the cast going into production feel like they had a hit based just on the script?

**Wells:** I don't think that way, and I don't think anyone else did either. It was an amazing script and I loved it, and I did feel blessed to be working with Michael, Stephen Spielberg [the producer] and the other great people. But whenever I did something, I never thought past the actual work on it.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Describe the working atmosphere of director Robert Zemeckis ... it's known to have been a pretty exhausting shoot. How did he keep everybody focused?

**Wells:** Everyone worked well together, so it was a team effort. I had gotten used to television, where we did ten pages a day, so for me it was pretty relaxed compared to what I knew at the time.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Okay, so after the film became a major hit, did you get more options as an actress and did you know what to do with those options?

**Wells:** I had no idea. I hear now 'oh I was so in love with you,' but at the time I had no idea. Even after the movie came out I didn't have a clue. To think of myself as important or 'famous,' my brain didn't and doesn't work that way.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Had you signed on to do the sequels?

**Wells:** I was meant to do the second and third sequels. My Mom was going through cancer, and was very ill, and there was too much turmoil at home. I backed out of the show business industry completely at the time. That's why I wasn't in the sequels.



Jennifer Parker Now: Claudia Wells in Chicago

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com, Hair and Makeup by Angela Brasington.



**HollywoodChicago.com:** How often do you hear from people comparing the two Jennifers? When a person supports you, what do they mention the most?

**Wells:** They always say, ‘your my favorite Jennifer Parker, you’re the only Jennifer Parker.’ [laughs] In the early days of the internet, someone finally told me to Google myself, and so I did it. There were all these websites around the world talking about my portrayal of Jennifer.

On these sites, and other internet destinations, there were all these rumors about where I was, but I was such a techno-idiot at the time I couldn’t get on and say, ‘hey, I’m still here.’ [laughs] Now I’ve done enough interviews so it doesn’t come up as much.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** In a classic film, no matter what your age, you can live forever. What do you think is legacy of the first ‘Back to the Future,’ and what makes you most proud to have been part of such a classic?

**Wells:** The legacy is that it’s still beloved, and is discovered by new generations. I get little kids and all other age ranges coming up to me because they recognize me from the film. It’s like people connecting to ‘It’s a Wonderful Life,’ they remember the joy, love and family when they first connected to it, and that doesn’t change. And just the dream of being able to switch back and forth in time, who doesn’t want to do that?

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What were the circumstances of you essentially leaving acting? What did you pursue after all the smoke from that had cleared?

**Wells:** At age 23, I opened a men’s fashion store called Armani Wells, with the intention of having a fabulous place for men to shop resale, especially designer labels. I shopped a lot of resale when I had to dress for industry parties, and I wanted men to have the same option. I also wanted a financial base, with the goal to go back into acting. But the store became a success and it was so much fun I never really got a chance to go back to acting, even as now I still want to act.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Also around that time, didn’t you meet and date a young George Clooney?

**Wells:** He was doing ‘Facts of Life,’ and my friend Mindy Cohen introduced us on the set. And even at the time, he had an amazing work ethic. I’d never met such a hard working actor prior to meeting George

**HollywoodChicago.com:** How long was your relationship?

**Wells:** Okay, that’s all! [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Finally, if you could go back in that DeLorean Time Machine to that young girl that was in the film, what would you tell her and why?

**Wells:** I would tell her not to put so much pressure on herself. And I would tell her that she’s a good person because God loves her ... and not because she’s starring in a major film.

*The “Back to the Future” reunion screenings, with Claudia Wells, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson and James Tolkán with take place at the Hollywood Blvd Cinema in Woodridge, IL, and the Hollywood Palms in Naperville. [Click here for information and tickets.](#) [13] The men’s fashion of Armani Wells by Claudia Wells [can be viewed here.](#) [14]*



[15]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [16]  
Senior Staff Writer  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [15]

© 2010 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

**Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 28 2024 - 3:45am*):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/10030/interview-claudia-wells-is-the-original-jennifer-in-back-to-the-future>

#### Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/back-to-the-future>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/christopher-lloyd>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/claudia-wells>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/george-clooney>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/lea-thompson>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/marty-mcfly>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/michael-j-fox>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/robert-zemeckis>

- [13] <http://www.atriptothemovies.com/>
- [14] <http://www.armaniwells.com/>
- [15] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>