

Oral History – Janice Tomlin

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Janice Tomlin is a network television documentary producer, who began her career in Dallas. Born in Arkansas, her father's job took the family to New Jersey when she was seven, then to Houston and ultimately Dallas. After graduating from the University of Texas with a bachelor's degree in Journalism, she interned at the Dallas Times Herald and worked as a freelancer for *D Magazine*, writing several investigative pieces.

With hopes of writing for *Time* or *Newsweek*, Tomlin moved to New York City but was offered an investigative position at the Better Government Association. The non-profit partnered with national print and television networks and Tomlin was assigned to ABC's *20/20*. After assisting on two shows, Tomlin was hired directly by *20/20*.

She produced segments for *20/20* for 12 years before being named Senior Editorial Producer and moved to management. In that role, Tomlin helped create and launch ABC's *Turning Point*, and hour-long documentary show anchored by Barbara Walters, Diane Sawyer, Peter Jennings and Meredith Vieira.

Before leaving *20/20*, Tomlin was home on Christmas Day, 1989, when Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were assassinated. After seeing a short story about French families whose Romanian adoptions had been frozen by Ceausescu, Tomlin believed there were American families in the same predicament and pitched the story to *20/20*. What followed would be a series of nine Emmy-winning stories over a period of 12 years that would expose the conditions of Romania's state-run orphanages and secret institutions for handicapped orphans. These reports would change the lives of people who saw them as well as some of the children in the orphanages.

She would also go on to adopt two daughters from Romania.

After supervising more than 100 documentary programs for *Turning Point*, a staff of over 100 people and managing six-figure show budgets, Tomlin's last three years at ABC were spent as Executive Producer of ABC news specials.

Making a network jump, Tomlin then moved to CBS and *60 Minutes*, where she produced investigative reports for Mike Wallace. After Wallace's retirement, she continued to produce for Steve Kroft and Bob Simon.

The Oprah Winfrey Show was lucky enough to land Tomlin as a producer. She produced for a season then was hired by HDNet to develop and launch *Dan Rather Reports*, another one-hour documentary program.

Today, Tomlin continues to produce for networks and is working on a Disney feature film. Her work has been recognized with 17 National Emmys, two duPont-Columbia University awards, three Overseas Press Club awards, two Robert F. Kennedy Journalism awards, two National Headliner awards and a Lifetime Achievement Emmy. Her work in advancing documentary on network television cannot be overstated.

Despite these accolades, Tomlin is most proud of her series on Romanian orphanages; a series which spurred international interest in Romanian orphans and changed the lives of countless children and adoptive families.