
The Biography of Tobias Wolff

Tobias Wolff was born on June 19th, 1945 in Birmingham, Alabama. He is the second son of Arthur Samuels Wolff and Rosemary Loftus Wolff. At age five, Tobias faced a family breakup where he and his mother separated from his father and older brother, Geoffrey, due to the instability his father kept in his family life. Wolff and his mother constantly moved. They lived first in Florida, then moved to Utah in 1955, and finally settled in the Pacific Northwest, where his mother remarried a troublesome man, Dwight Hansen. They lived in Newhalem, Washington with Hansen and his three children.

Wolff attended Concrete High School until he left for Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, where he faked his references to be accepted. He attended Hill School for a year but did not graduate and instead ended up joining the military for four years. Wolff's family also did not reunite until 1961 when he saw his older brother and father after eleven years. From 1964 to 1968, Wolff served in the U.S. Army Special Forces, where he was assigned his post in Vietnam.

After serving those years, Wolff traveled to England and enrolled at Oxford University. In 1972, he received his bachelor's degree at Oxford and in 1975, received a master's degree at Oxford. Returning to America, he worked first as a reporter for The Washington Post, then at various restaurant jobs in California. In 1975, he married Catherine Dolores Spohn, a teacher and social worker. They later had two sons and a daughter; Michael, Patrick, and Mary Elizabeth. Wolff enrolled at Stanford University the same year and soon received a master's degree from Stanford in 1978. While at Stanford, he met and became friends with other writers, including Raymond Carver. During this time, he supported himself by teaching.

Besides short stories, Tobias Wolff has published a novella, *The Barracks Thief* (1984), and a memoir, *This Boy's Life* (1989). He also edited short-story anthologies, including *The Best American Short Stories* (1994). While pursuing his own writing, Wolff has taught creative writing at Goddard College and Arizona State University. Currently, he lives with his family in upstate New York and teaches at Syracuse University. Wolff has also influenced countless people, including the famous David Sedaris, an American comedian and author. Sedaris claims he is Wolff's "biggest fan" as he has read every word Wolff has ever written.

Wolff's work has won numerous literary prizes. He received a Wallace Stegner Fellowship in 1975 to study creative writing at Stanford University and won creative writing grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. Wolff has been awarded the 1985 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction for *The Barracks Thief* and a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship.

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His *This Boy's Life: A Memoir* won The Los Angeles Times book prize for biography. He has also received a Whiting Foundation Award (1990), a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Award (1994), and a Lyndhurst Foundation Award (1994).

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