
Times Facts

Tom joined the *Times* in January 1981 as a night cops reporter, then covered the criminal and civil courts. He later worked as a general assignment reporter, first for the city desk and then for newsfeatures. For the past 17 years, he has been writing serial narratives — book-length stories that are published gradually in the paper, one chapter at a time.

Talking points

• Education and the public schools • Criminal justice system • Journalism, especially high school journalists and censorship

Tom has made several national TV appearances including the Oprah Winfrey Show, Good Morning America and Sally Jesse Raphael, as well as many local TV shows. He has been interviewed on National Public Radio and various other radio news and feature programs.

Education

Tom graduated from Pike High School in Indianapolis in 1976, and from Indiana University in 1980 with a bachelor's degree in journalism.

Background

Tom came to the *Times* immediately after graduating from college. Following his cops and courts beats he joined newsfeatures where he covered everything from executions to hurricanes to freeze-dried pets to drunken college students carousing through Fort Lauderdale. His serial narratives have included *A Cry in the Night*, which chronicled a murder case in Gulfport, FL; *South of Heaven*, which followed a handful of students through one year at Largo High School; *Babyland*, which profiled two teen mothers; *Angels & Demons*, which told the story of the Tampa Bay murders of three Ohio women and the search for their killer; *The Girl Whose Mother Lives in the Sky* which described the lives of several pre-school children whose parents were refugees from Southeast Asia; and "13," a six-part series — reported and written with Monique Fields and Dong-Phuong Nguyen — that chronicled a few months in the lives of some Tampa seventh-graders and their parents. Tom has written two books, *Unanswered Cries*, published by St. Martin's Press in 1991, and *South of Heaven*, published by Doubleday in 1993. Both were based on his *Times* stories. Tom also teaches nonfiction writing in a Master's program at Goucher College in Maryland. He lives in St. Petersburg and has two sons.

Awards

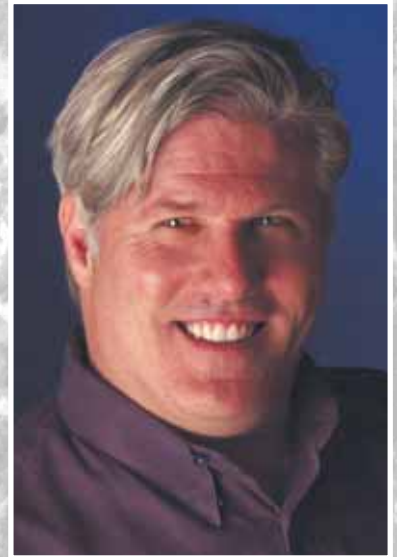
Among many awards, Tom won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing for his *Angels & Demons* series which also garnered the Society of Professional Journalists' national award for Best Feature Reporting. He is a Livingston Award winner and two-time finalist in the American Society of Newspaper Editors' writing competition. In 2006, Tom won a Green Eyeshade Award from the Society of Professional Journalists for the piece "The Hard Road: Inside the Jennifer Porter Case."

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