



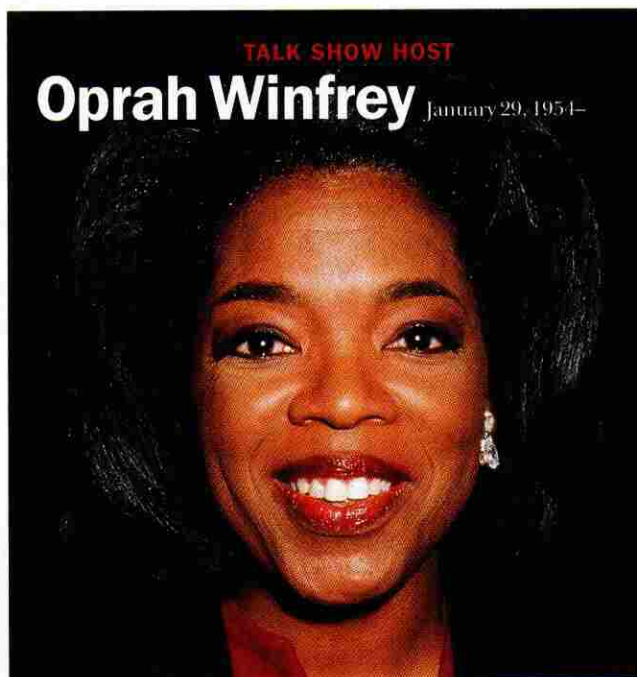
TELEVISION JOURNALIST

Barbara Walters

September 25, 1931–

As a TV legend, Barbara Walters has done it all—and opened the door for other women to join her in the once all-male domain of network news. Over the course of a five-decade career, Walters has risen from researcher/writer on the *Today* show to co-host of that program, co-anchor of the *ABC Evening News*, host of her own Barbara Walters specials, co-anchor of *20/20*, and executive producer and co-host of *The View*. She has interviewed everyone from Princess Diana to Fidel Castro, Boris Yeltsin, Barbra Streisand, Katharine Hepburn, Jack Kevorkian, and Monica Lewinsky. The intrepid Walters, who also has talked on-air with every U.S. president since Richard Nixon, has made it abundantly clear that a female interviewer can be just as sharp, serious, and savvy as a man. And she never let age stop her. As Katie Couric once said, the fact that Walters, who just turned 70, is still on-air “gives all women a real boost.”

The daughter of nightclub impresario Lou Walters, owner of New York’s swank Latin Quarter, Walters grew up amid celebrities and entertainers, perhaps laying the groundwork for a career spent asking intimate questions of public figures. Married and divorced three times, she is the mother of a daughter, Jacqueline.



She’s an unstoppable phenomenon, almost certainly the most familiar face on television, one of this country’s wealthiest entertainers, and so powerful there’s even a phrase for her staggering influence: *The Oprah Effect*.

With the *Oprah Winfrey Show* reigning as the most popular talk show in the world, and the highest-rated talk show in TV history, Winfrey could have rested on her laurels. Instead she proved herself as an Academy Award-nominated actress, film producer, philanthropist, and founder of the successful magazine *O*, named after herself. She also owns her own TV/film studio and production company, Harpo (that’s Oprah backward).

A native of Kosciusko, Mississippi, raised by her grandmother in a farmhouse that lacked indoor plumbing, Winfrey attended Tennessee State University and began working in television in Nashville and Baltimore before moving to Chicago in 1984 and launching her own talk show. But she has never forgotten the painful parts of her life, sharing them with viewers (along with her ongoing weight fluctuations). “I think people connect to my vulnerability,” she once theorized.

Winfrey, who has been engaged for nine years to business executive Stedman Graham, swore off confrontational talk show topics in 1994 and later launched what she called “change-your-life television,” focusing on self-help segments and lifestyle makeovers. “I use myself to inspire other people,” she explained.