

# Janese Swanson

*Software Engineering CSU33012*



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## ABSTRACT

This is a personal essay on the Biography of Janese Swanson, and why she is somebody that has impacted software engineering, as well as someone who inspires me.

## INTRODUCTION

Janese Swanson, born in 1958 (aged 63 years) is an American software developer. Famous for founding Girl Tech, a company that helps promote technology, making it more interesting for women. The native of California was founder and CEO of Girl Tech (1995.) She produced Playroom and Treehouse, early learning software, and has developed award winning curricula, electronic toys and books, to encourage girls to explore technology and software.

## Early Life

Janese Swanson, a native of California, was founder and CEO of Girl Tech (1995), a company created to bring girls into the world of technology. The second of 6 kids, Swanson was raised by her mother after her father died in the Vietnam war.

She always had an interest in technology, often tinkering with house appliances

She was given a typewriter as a present and she concluded that “it was boring” and “it would be much more interesting” to take it apart. Swanson “figured out how to change the keys around so I could type my own secret code.” Swanson wrote in the introduction to the book [Tech Girl's Internet Adventures](#) (John Wiley & Sons, 1997).

At the age of 15, Swanson began working at a department store (Spears) as a sales person in the television and sound system department. This came in handy then when she became manager of the technology department at a store called My Destiny's Child.

It has been said that from a young age Swanson had an immense interest in technology. She was typically interested in “Male” jobs, however her grandfather convinced her to get a more stereotypically female job and for her to become a model. Here she discovered her talent for design and magazine layout, alongside the superficial and destructive stereotypical values of the world.

## Education

Swanson graduated from Orange Glen High School in 1975, Whilst in high school she worked in department stores.

Following high school she earned a bachelor's degree in liberal studies in 1981 from San Diego State University. She went on to work as a teacher, a flight attendant and a model .

Whilst working as a flight attendant she convinced a computer company to donate laptops, and as part of her free time she focused on teaching her fellow female coworkers how to use them.

Additionally she further continued her studies, in time accumulating a total of 7 academic degrees. Some of which include a doctorate in organization and leadership, with a doctoral thesis on gender issues in product design, play patterns and gender preferences. Swanson received her Ed.D. in Organization and Leadership Technology in 1997 from the University of San Francisco.

## Her Work

Building on her experience as flight attendant and school teacher, In the late 1980s, Swanson was hired by Broderbund Software. Here she served on a software team where she helped develop video games such as *The Treehouse*, *The Playroom*, and the Macintosh edition of the game *Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?*

In addition to this, She invented gadgets for her daughter, including a voice recording device. Swanson hoped to install this recording device in Jackie's daycare cubby and in her office. She proclaimed, “ I miss her so much that I used to call my home answering machine to hear her voice and I thought that this would let me talk to her during the day.”

In 1992, Swanson left Broderbund to develop technology which would electronically change a person's voice pitches and modulation. With this she started her own company, Kid one for Fun for developing and licensing Yak Bak to Yes! Entertainment and Talkboy F/C+ to tiger electronics.

In 1995, She expressed interest in and decided she wanted to create software and toys aimed at girls, which would give girls an insight into the world of technology and STEM. She founded Girl Tech as an independent company with their headquarters near her family home in San Rafael, California. Whilst working in Girl Tech she engineered “Friend Frame” talking picture frame, the snoop stopper “Keepsafe” box storage box with a remote controlled lock, Me-Mail message center, Zap N’ lock journal and Swap-It Locket, and a remote controlled listening device called “Bug ‘Em”.

Girl Tech also published books on technology for girls , worked with community groups and developed a technology curriculum for girl scouts councils. She later sold the company for \$6 million to Radica games, now a division of Mattel. She also licensed her technologies and software to Hasbro and Sega.

Swanson worked as an Education Coordinator at the United States Mint, and was a founder at the Art Apprentice. Currently she is now a teacher in the Del Mar Union School District, and uses her computer software skills to encourage her students to create artwork.

Some of her Publications include *Tech Girls’ Adventures*, *Tech Girls’ Activity book*, and *Girlzine: A Magazine for the Global Girl*. She has developed award-winning curricula , electronic toys, software, and books which encourage girls to explore technology and inventions.

## Awards

Without a doubt Swanson was an influential person in the world of Software Engineering and technology. Her dedication to helping and encouraging girls was recognised in many of the awards she won, some of which include: “Annual Leading Change Award” from Women in Communications, Webgirls, “Top 25 Women on the Web,” YWCA of the USA “Advancement of Girls and Technology,” and “Women Entrepreneur of the Year Nominee” from National Association of Women Business Owners. She was also featured in Ms. Magazine's “Women of the Year” issue in 1997.

## Impact on Sweng

Swanson may not have invented google, or been the lead Software engineer for creating

Linux, however, I believe that Swanson has a great impact on Sweng. Whilst researching who to write my essay on, the first thing I did was think about what software engineers I know; Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Linus Torvalds and Tim Berners-Lee. Although these men have all made significant contributions to software engineering, and would be very intriguing to write about, they are all men. There was an abundance of research on these men. Therefore I made it my aim to research and investigate women who have made considerable contributions to the world of STEM and Software engineering. After much research, I found Janese Swanson fascinating and decided to write my essay about her. Along with the contributions I have stated earlier, Janese Swanson helped to destigmatize the taboo of women studying and working in fields such as Software Engineering. She encouraged thousands of girls to explore their interest in technology and consequently had an impact on software engineering. It was people like Janese Swanson who broke the glass ceiling, therefore paving the way for women like me to work, and allow me to have interest in a male dominated field. She is an inspiration to many women and has had a pivotal impact on Software engineering.

## REFERENCES

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