



A Story of

TRAVEL, HEROES & VILLAINS

BY CAROL ATKINSON



TO PLAY AGAIN

I would like to be able to play again
Those meaningless little games I used to play
In the Spring and in the Summer,
And have no care for reasons or for rules.
For they were green-grass and blue-sky game
And they asked nothing of their players.

--Paul D. Martin
Second Runner-up
Poetry

LIVING THE DREAM FOR PAUL MARTIN IS HOPPING A DAILY TRAIN TO THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS IN WASHINGTON, D.C. TO FIND MORE NARRATIVES STORED THERE OF PEOPLE LONG PAST. HE IS, IN FACT, LIVING MOST EVERY WRITER'S DREAM.

Martin has translated his love of research, writing and narrative into a 30-year career at various publications of the National Geographic Society. Since retiring in 2009, he writes books simply about people who interest him. He's published one book about rather obscure but fascinating villains he met in his research. He also completed a book on heroes. Not the landing on the moon type of hero but the hero who helped change the path of history in a positive way, then quickly disappeared from the public consciousness.

"I fell into a bed of roses," Martin said of his career that began with a serendipitous trip from Columbia some 30 years ago to interview for a position at National Geographic in Washington. "I didn't plan that far ahead. I just got interested in things and that moved me from one thing after another."

While so many stories must have a beginning, Martin's probably began in Clinton, MO, where his family lived. His personal kindness, openness and heartfelt love of life reflect what could be considered

small-town conditioning. Yet in some ways, his story also seems to begin at Central Missouri State College, where he was inspired to blossom and grow by faculty who encouraged his writing.

"So many of today's youth are pushed into career decisions," Martin said. "I had no idea what I wanted to do. I didn't declare my major until my sophomore year. I just drifted



along. Then I took some literature classes and I was suddenly making As without any effort at all. I laughed so much. I was getting college credit for reading novels!"

Once he committed to being an English major, Martin earned straight As. English faculty member Ronald McReynolds, who was also a poet and currently a long-time Warrensburg resident, inspired Martin to do some writing of his own. Martin wrote a few poems that were good enough to be published in CMSC's publication, "Cemost '66." He won second runner-up for his poem titled "To Play Again."

Martin also decided to minor in journalism.

"There were just a few courses in journalism that were offered in the English department," he said. "The head of the journalism sequence was Evelyn Runyan, who had been a newspaper woman for a long time. She was the only instructor in journalism. I took her classes and really enjoyed them. I didn't know what I would do with an English degree and I knew I would need a master's to teach, so I thought journalism was a good addition."

Runyan, he said, was stern and a chain smoker. She was about five feet tall and gray haired. "She would have scared you," he laughed. Yet he credits her with refining his writing and research.

Within a few weeks after his graduation in 1967, Martin received his draft notice that, he said, helped him to decide what to do. He joined the U.S. Navy. With his background in journalism, he was tapped



TOP FROM LEFT: For Paul Martin's travels and books come images such as Kansas Senator James Lane, a villain whose vicious border war attacks unleashed the James-Younger gang; the Taj Mahal in India; and Inez Boissevain, whom Martin labeled "America's Joan of Arc."

BOTTOM FROM LEFT: Martin called Civil War doctor Jonathan Letterman "Father of Battlefield Medicine" and "Healer of the Fallen," talked about counterfeiter Emerich Juettner who fooled the Secret Service for 20 years, and Hetty Green, a miserly multi-millionaire he named the "Witch of Wall Street." Historic images are courtesy of the Library of Congress.

to write for the “Navy Times.” That work turned into contributions to the “All Hands” magazine, “Stars & Stripes” and the “Saigon Post.” He spent a year in Vietnam, returning

it and the job at the children’s publication, “National Geographic World,” turned out to be a good decision. Signing on in 1979, Martin wrote and edited there for two years,

also editing two books targeted at 8 to 13 year olds.

“I really wanted to work on adult products, so after two years I asked to transfer,” he said. His boss said yes, and Martin began editing books. That stint lasted eight years until he transferred to “National Geographic Traveler.”

“My boss, who was head of the children’s section and the book section and the ‘Traveler’ magazine told me that the ‘Traveler’ was struggling and needed someone to get the

magazine planned and scheduled,” Martin said. “‘If you go down there and spend six to nine months, then you can come back to books,’ my boss said. So I went to the ‘Traveler’ and spent 20 years there. After eight years on books, I realized that I liked the magazine better.

“It was the pace, constantly something new. I remembered that you spend so much time and intensity on books, that by the time they come out, I didn’t even want to look at them again. Books, I found, didn’t keep my interest as much as a magazine. Every issue

is new. Well, at the ‘Traveler,’ I got to write quite a bit and travel all over the world. I said to the boss, ‘Can I stay?’ And the boss said, ‘Stay if you want to.’”

Ironically, books now hold Martin’s interest. A history buff, Martin said he’d always been interested in minor characters who have had some pivotal role in some great events.

“So I started collecting those names,” Martin said. “I decided to write a book about these people who had done some amazing things, sort of secret heroes.”

Martin said he created a list of 30 people who he thought deserved to be listed in a book of unsung heroes, then contacted faculty at several universities asking for their nominations of top unsung heroes. He received about 36 suggestions, which he culled down to those he included in the book, “Secret Heroes: Everyday Americans Who Shaped Our World.”

One of his unsung heroes is Hercules Mulligan, an Irishman who became a New York tailor in the mid-1700s. With revolution percolating around the colonies, Mulligan became a member of the Sons of Liberty and later came to be friends with a young Alexander Hamilton, then a supporter of the Crown. During long discussions in the evenings, Hamilton came to see Mulligan’s position and joined the Sons of Liberty. Hamilton later became an aide to General George Washington and passed along information Mulligan culled from

MARTIN’S WRITING ASSIGNMENTS HAVE TAKEN HIM AROUND THE WORLD, WORKING WITH SOME OF THE TOP WRITERS OF THE DAY INCLUDING RAY BRADBURY, CALVIN TRILLIN, BILL BRYSON AND CARL HIAASEN.

to Missouri in 1971. He enrolled in the University of Missouri’s graduate program in journalism.

“That opened some doors for me,” he said. He wrote for a monthly boating magazine called “Outdoors,” then landed a position as a managing editor of a monthly medical journal in Kansas City titled “Continuing Education for the Family Physician.” After five and a half years, the journal was sold and its headquarters moved to New York. Martin began job hunting. He had a connection with a person at National Geographic and so made a call. He secured an interview and landed a job.

“The biggest coincidence, or serendipity, was while I was at MU,” Martin said. “I came up one hour short of 36 hours to graduate. I went to a professor named Angus McDougal. I told him I needed one more hour. I signed up for a one-hour class over break and wrote a paper for him. He liked it and gave me an A and told me to try to sell it to a trade magazine.”

The story got picked up by “Folio” magazine. A young man who wrote the caption for the story in “Folio” told Martin that if he was ever in Washington, D.C., to give him a call and stop by. So, Martin gave him a call and wound up with a job at National Geographic. While Martin said it was a big step to fly to the interview, he did

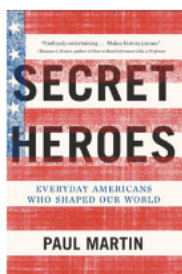
BELOW: Martin’s travel photo of Vietnam contrasts with two of his heroes: Carl Akeley, a museum taxidermist he called “The Intrepid Leopard Wrestler” and Grace Abbott, “Defender of the Defenseless” who pioneered work in immigrant protection and child labor laws.



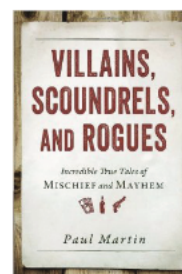


BOOKS BY

Paul
Martin



In his book, "Secret Heroes," Martin introduces a case of saints, visionaries and rogues. These 30 inspiring unsung Americans range from Hercules Mulligan, a tailor who twice saved George Washington's life, to sisters whose notoriety began spiritualism, communicating with the dead. Read about all of Martin's heroes.



In his second book, "Villains, Scoundrels, and Rogues," Martin profiles memorable American rogues, ranging from a rabid, homicidal judge who presided over the Salem Witch Trials to the most outrageous television and Internet huckster ever. Read about all of Martin's villains.

FOR 20 YEARS, PAUL MARTIN WAS MANAGING AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF "NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER," THE WORLD'S MOST WIDELY READ TRAVEL MAGAZINE. HE FREQUENTLY APPEARED ON CBS THIS MORNING AND CNN TRAVEL SEGMENTS AND GAVE LECTURES ON TRAVEL WRITING THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

his British clients. That information saved Washington's life twice. Today, Mulligan is buried near Hamilton, the more famous founder and first secretary of the Treasury.

In his search for heroes, Martin found villains as well. So he decided to do a similar book about some bad guys.

"I found the experience writing about villains more fun," Martin said. "With the heroes, you have to be more respectful because they deserve it. But the bad guys, I could really poke fun at these characters."

His favorite character in his book titled "Villains, Scoundrels, and Rogues" is Mister 880. Well, that's the title of a film that was made about this fellow, Edward Mueller. His real name was Emerich Juettner. The film came out in 1950 starring Burt Lancaster and Dorothy McGuire.

"Here's this Austrian immigrant who came to the U.S. as a teen to New York City," Martin said. "He worked in a picture frame shop and studied photo engraving. He ended up taking a picture of a one-dollar bill and started counterfeiting these dollars. He operated for years passing these bills. They were so amateur. He misspelled George Washington's name, for example

[Wahsington]. He would go to a crowded business and buy a \$.05 object and get \$.95 back. Never visited the same place twice and never took advantage of people. He 'cashed' in just enough to keep himself and his dog from starving."

Juettner was finally caught when his apartment caught fire, and his documents were scooped out to the ground below. After 20 years, the Secret Service finally found their man. Over those 20 years, Juettner had cashed in almost \$5,000.

"He was just an old doddering man," Martin said. "He spent only a month in jail. Just the quiriness and oddity. You have to be respectful of the heroes, but the villains were different."

Martin returns to Warrensburg every couple of years to visit his sister in Clinton. Martin and his wife of 47 years (high school sweethearts) still live in the same house they bought in 1979. They have a son working toward a degree at Virginia Tech. Martin said the last time he visited Warrensburg, he was amazed that the campus looked so much as it had when he was there. Still clean, well maintained and a comfortable place to be. He said it brought back many memories.

Yet he likes where he is these days. And there are more books in the waiting.

"I've always felt that today we're obsessed with celebrities and sports and Wall Street moguls," he said. "I am just more interested in small-time heroes. Maybe it's my small-town upbringing. I love to ferret out what these people have done.

"It's a treasure hunt," he said. "I go down to the Library of Congress, find this wonderful story about this character and find these wonderful tales. It's like they come to life. That's what is so much fun." ■



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