

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

# MIZZOU

## The Bad, Ugly and Downright Despicable

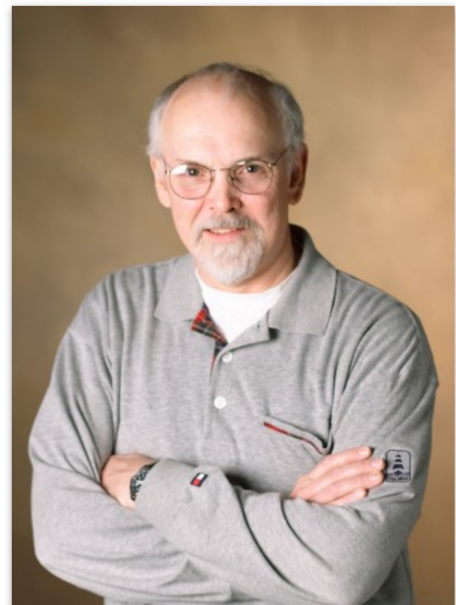
Former *National Geographic Traveler* editor finds real-life heroes and villains.

Story by Marcus Wilkins

Published Aug. 14, 2014

**E**merich Juettner was a counterfeiter whose conscience limited his crimes to \$1 bills and paltry purchases. John Parker was Abraham Lincoln's incompetent bodyguard whose negligence led to the president's demise. Belle Gunness was a turn-of-the-century serial killer who murdered dozens, including her children, and several husbands and suitors.

These are but three of 30 characters profiled in *Villains, Scoundrels and*



Paul Martin, former executive editor of *National Geographic Traveler*, lives in Falls Church, Va. Photo courtesy of Paul Martin.

*Rogues: Incredible True Tales of Mischief and Mayhem* (Prometheus Books, 2014), by former *National Geographic Traveler* executive editor Paul Martin. The book is a follow up to *Secret Heroes: Everyday Americans Who Shaped Our World* (William Morrow Paperbacks, 2012).

“I made a list of every type of offense I could think of — everything from gamblers, con men and mediums to medical charlatans, slave traders, pirates — then I simply started looking for the most colorful stories in these categories,” says Martin, who admits to having more fun writing about the bad guys than the good guys. “I also looked for people who had interesting stories *beyond* their offenses.”

Martin’s writing style has a snappy readability that might stem in part from a research project he undertook in Professor Angus McDougall’s photojournalism course at MU. Needing one credit to complete his master’s degree, Martin, MA ’73, investigated effective caption writing and cited an article from *National Geographic* as a shining example.

McDougall was so impressed that he suggested Martin sell the paper to the journalism industry magazine *Folio*, which published it. Months later, the author of the exemplary captions phoned Martin to say thanks and invite him to his Washington, D.C. office.

That foot in the door led to a 30-year career with the renowned organization. Martin has traveled to about 30 countries and met scores of people with compelling stories, which is one reason he appreciates telling untold tales.

Reflecting on his years with *National Geographic*, Martin says that “sometimes, the higher you rise in an organization, the further away you get from the core discipline you really love, which in my case is writing and editing.” But Martin thoroughly enjoys working on his books. “I would chuckle as I was writing [*Villains, Scoundrels and Rogues*] because the stories were just so over the top.”

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