



Villains, Scoundrels, and Rogues: Incredible True Tales of Mischief and Mayhem

By Paul Martin

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Villains, Scoundrels, and Rogues: Incredible True Tales of Mischief and Mayhem By Paul Martin

Everyone loves a good villain! From the back pages of history, vivid, entertaining portraits of little-known scoundrels whose misdeeds range from the simply inept to the truly horrifying.

Even if you're an avid history buff, you've probably never heard of this disreputable cast of characters: A drunken, ne'er-do-well cop who abandoned his post at Ford's Theatre, giving assassin John Wilkes Booth unchallenged access to President Lincoln; a notorious Kansas quack who made millions by implanting billy goat testicles in gullible male patients; and America's worst female serial killer ever. These are three of the memorable but little-known rogues profiled in this eye-opening and entertaining book.

Dividing his profiles into three categories--villains, scoundrels, and rogues--author and former *National Geographic* editor Paul Martin serves up concise, colorful biographies of thirty of America's most outrageous characters. Whether readers choose to be horrified by the story of Ed Gein, Alfred Hitchcock's hideous inspiration for *Psycho*, or marvel at the clever duplicity of the con artist who originated the phony bookie operation portrayed in *The Sting*, there's something here for everyone.

Brimming with audacious, unforgettable characters often overlooked by standard history books, this page-turner is a must for anyone with an interest in the varieties of human misbehavior.

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Editorial Review

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This collection of exceptionally well-crafted historical portraits deals, in descending order, with monsters, the merely evil, and the unscrupulous. The first include such people as the owners of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company and serial murderer Ed Gein. The second includes Old West adventuress Squirrel Tooth Annie, the journalist who puffed up Robert Peary's claim to have reached the North Pole, and a doctor who lent himself to the American eugenics movement. The last category includes a number of the merely fraudulent as well as a charming old gentleman who counterfeited one-dollar bills to keep himself in pocket change. Apart from his literate writing, Martin also has the knack for passing harsh judgments when they are deserved and also withholding them when they are not. A model of how to write short popular history. --Roland Green

Review

"Martin's rich and varied portraits display misbehavior, from simple idiocy and apathy to conniving con men, gold diggers, and gamblers.... They make a pretty reprehensible bunch, but Martin puts their crimes in context while keeping the book entertaining and informative." --*Publishers Weekly* STARRED REVIEW

"This collection of exceptionally well-crafted historical portraits deals, in descending order, with monsters, the merely evil, and the unscrupulous.... Apart from his literate writing, Martin also has the knack for passing harsh judgments when they are deserved and also withholding them when they are not. A model of how to write short popular history." --*Booklist*

Praise for *Secret Heroes*:

"Will surprise and, perhaps, inspire readers." --*Booklist*

"Self-sacrifice and determination abound in the tales....Meticulously researched, Martin holds his subjects in deserved high-esteem." --*Publishers Weekly*

"Reverent character sketches of some unusually self-reliant Americans....Inspirational yarns of exceptional folks who made a difference...surprisingly entertaining." --*Kirkus Reviews*

About the Author

Paul Martin, who spent more than thirty years with the National Geographic Society as an editor and writer, is the author of *Secret Heroes: Everyday Americans Who Shaped Our World* (William Morrow, 2012); *Land of the Ascending Dragon: Rediscovering Vietnam* (Gates & Bridges, 1997); two other nonfiction books and more than a hundred articles.

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