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Private eye

Parsippany's R. Michael Martin always has his eye on something. President of Priority Security Systems, a licensed private detection agency, Martin often puts in long hours to complete an investigation.

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Profile

His eyes are always open

BY HANNAH ROWAN

PARSIPPANY - "Private investigation is not like TV where you go out and solve crimes just for the sake of solving it," says R. Michael Martin, president of Priority Security Systems, a licensed private detection agency.

Only 10 percent of those who enter the field as trainees actually stay in the field, which is "very demanding, hours are long and poor, and the pay is poor in the beginning," Martin says. On the plus side, Martin finds private investigating "a lot of fun, very challenging" because "you are making use of your wits." Completing an investigation provides "immediate job satisfaction" because "you're always working toward a goal, not waiting for vacations or weekends."

Martin became interested in private investigating during college, partly because of his brother's experiences in the military police and through his own interest in law enforcement. He makes a distinction between law enforcement and investigating, however. "People mistake it for an aspect of law enforcement," Martin says, but investigators are able to work in areas that police departments often do not have time to cover.

Although Martin attended the New Jersey State Police Academy training at Sea Girt, he decided that his personality called for a more "independent" line of work. "I'm one of the few people who have done it by starting from scratch," Martin says, noting that many investigators are retired police officers.

Martin emphasizes that investigating is not the glamorous profession portrayed on TV and in movies. An investigator could spend an entire day on a "stake-out," for example, not the 30 seconds shown in dramatizations.

Martin's work consists mainly of security consulting for businesses, assisting attorneys in gathering information, and administering lie detector tests for employers, done mostly in New York since New Jersey does not permit the use of lie detectors for employment.

Martin is certified by the New York School of Lie Detection, and is also an instructor at the Superior Career Institute in New York City, training prospective investigators.

Now that Martin has completed the required 10,000 hours of work that qualifies him for a state license, he is interested in sharing his experience with others who are interested in the field. He would also like to employ more retired people in his firm.

Martin lives in Lake Parsippany with his wife, who is a paralegal.



R. MICHAEL MARTIN