

By **ALEXIS McDANIEL**
For The State Journal

BRIDGEPORT — **Jim Martin** believed he had to leave the Mountain State to find success.

Turns out, he was wrong — and that doesn't happen often.

JIM Martin

Age: 36
Hometown: Elkins
Family: Wife, Stacy, and three children: Trey, 5; Tyler, 4; and Samantha, 1.
Fun fact: His boyhood interest in his neighbor's airplane spurred him to seek his own pilot's license. He owns a two-person Piper Cherokee, which is parked at the North Central West Virginia Airport.

After forging his way through the rapidly changing field of technology, which took off like a rocket in the 1990s, Martin is the co-owner and chief executive officer of **Citynet**.

His show-no-fear attitude has made him a pioneer in the Internet service and computer consulting industry and a *Who's Who* for The State Journal in 2008 at the age of 36.

He lives in Harrison County with his wife, **Stacy**, and their three children. He said staying in West Virginia was the right decision. Today, life is "iconic."

"I can't imagine living anywhere else," Martin said. "People are just good people here. It's a great place to raise a family."

Life in Beverly Hills

James Robert John Martin II was born in Elkins on June 8, 1972. His parents, **Jim** and **Lois**, Philadelphia natives, met as students at **Davis & Elkins College**. They had two other children, **Todd** and **Courtney**.

His father worked for the **West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources**, and his mother was a preschool teacher for special-needs children.

Martin took advantage of the activities available to him in rural Randolph County. He enjoyed soccer, wrestling and skiing.

Although Beverly is a rural community, his neighborhood was named after a popular television show of the time. Not quite "The Beverly Hillbillies," but the Martins called "Beverly Hills" home.

Martin speculates that may be one reason he dreamed of living in California or just about anywhere other than West Virginia.

"I knew there was more opportunity out there," Martin said.

One of his fondest memories is watching a neighbor who frequently flew his small airplane from a field. At home, he often spent his free time tinkering on the family's computer.

"I wanted to be an astronautical engineer designing space stations," he said.

In high school, Martin was an exceptional student and the president of his 11th grade class.

But — as he likes to put it — he had a stubborn and often rebellious streak. It was during those times that Martin clashed with his dad and decided to leave his house at age 15.

He moved into the home of a best friend. Although his friend was at military school, his friend's dad let Martin stay. Martin had to work, though, doing odd jobs and helping his classmates with their homework. He managed to get by.

"I was basically on my own," he said.

He was fortunate. He had two opportunities at that time in his life. Even though he was young for his grade, 16, he was just one class short of graduating before entering his senior year.

He was seeking an appointment to the **United States Air Force Academy**. However, his guidance counselor suggested he try the new **West Virginia University Early Admissions Program**.

He picked option number two, thrilled to miss his senior year at **Elkins High School**, to be on



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Jim Martin has said staying in West Virginia was the right decision for his family, including wife, Stacy, and three children, from left, Samantha, 1; Trey, 5; and Tyler, 4.



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Citynet owner Jim Martin and Senior Vice President Drew Pomeroy go over paperwork at the office in Bridgeport. Martin began his Internet and computer consulting company from his apartment in Morgantown in 1994. Later, as Martin got busier, he moved to Bridgeport and hired Pomeroy as one of his first employees.

his own and in the larger city of Morgantown. He decided to pay for college through student loans and the GI Bill, enlisting

on his 17th birthday just prior to college.

On His Own at WVU

Martin enjoyed his new life, but he carried a heavy burden at the university. He was in the honors program, had to balance that with attending military training in South Carolina and Georgia, plus he had to pay his own bills.

To earn money, he donated plasma and worked as a waiter at a sorority.

He met his wife, Stacy, on New Year's Day when WVU played in the Sugar Bowl. She realized Martin was not like most of the college boys she knew.

"He was extremely motivated," said Stacy, who was a WVU student, too, but she was preparing to go to law school in Ohio. Martin told her that the World Wide Web was going to be "big," and Stacy wasn't quite sure what that meant at the time.

"He sees things way ahead of the game," she said. "I was really impressed."

Martin earned his undergraduate degree in computer science in 1993. He moved directly into graduate school, where he was awarded an assistantship to be paid to teach undergraduate classes while working on his master's degree in computer science.

His father opened the **West Virginia Brewing Co.**, and Martin also worked there as a bartender.

But Martin still had a little stubborn streak in him. During one class, he verbally sparred with a professor in a debate over barcodes and how

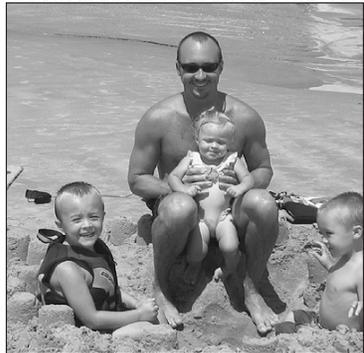


Photo courtesy of Jim Martin

When he is not working, Jim Martin said he likes to spend time with his children or doing extreme sports such as skiing, kayaking, flying his plane or scuba diving.

the technology was changing.

He felt the teacher's information was outdated and incorrect and wondered why he was wasting two years of his life in classes when he was ready to work.

He quit school.

Business Ventures

Some people might have seen that as a mistake. Not Martin. Not even looking back. It worked in his favor.

He finished his teaching assignment for the semester and launched his first business — **MarCom** — in 1994. It was a prime time to enter the technology field. The Internet was being made available to the public.

"I saw an opportunity there and decided to start up an Internet business and computer consulting," Martin said.

In six months, he stopped pouring beer at the pub and operated MarCom full time out of his small apartment. For a short time, he moved to an office in Morgantown, yet when he learned that the **FBI** was opening in Clarksburg, he realized that was the best location for him.

He wanted to offer dial-up Internet service in Bridgeport, where many of the technology-savvy **FBI** employees would likely live. A **Small Business Administration** loan for \$100,000 helped pave the way.

Around the same time, Citynet launched in Charleston with the same agenda. Both companies provided dial-up Internet access and Web site development.

And that's also when business started booming.

Between 1997 and 2001, Martin sold part of his company, then all of his company (but remained as president of the venture that combined both MarCom and Citynet).

In a twist of events, he joined with several other partners, including **Parry Petroplus**, **Steve Lorenz** and **Milan Puskar**, to buy back what's known solely as Citynet in 2001. The partners spent \$50 million expanding it into a wholesale and retail business, creating a company that employed 175.

"I owe a lot to them. They were instrumental in my success," Martin said of his part-

ners. "They are the best West Virginia business people you will find."

In 2007, Citynet made another move, becoming a full-service provider of telecommunications and IT services by buying Morgantown-based **Veritech**.

In 2008, Citynet slimmed down, selling its wholesale division.

Citynet now serves business and residential customers in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio, offering local and long-distance telephone service, Internet service, Web site development and hosting, e-mail, specialized software creation services, data services, IT-managed network services and computer repair.

Martin said he tries to create a positive work environment for the company's 100 employees. At least once a month, Citynet schedules an after-hours event to bring employees together. There's a focus on leadership development and promotion from within.

Drew Pomeroy, senior vice president, appreciates Martin's approach to being the boss, as well as their long friendship. Pomeroy was one of Martin's first employees after moving to Bridgeport.

"His biggest attribute — he never sees a bad idea," Pomeroy said. "Everybody's input counts."

Fast-Paced Hobbies

When Martin isn't at work, he's spending time with his wife and kids (**Trey**, 5; **Tyler**, 4; and **Samantha**, 1) and on some interesting hobbies.

Despite growing up in prime mountain territory, you won't find him with a shotgun or fishing pole on the weekends. He's more likely to be coming down a steep slope on skis or through a river rapid in a kayak.

Martin likes golf, but the slow pace can be boring.

His boyhood interest in his neighbor's airplane spurred him to seek his own pilot's license. He owns a two-person Piper Cherokee, which is parked at the **North Central West Virginia Airport**.

He and Stacy became certified in scuba diving during their honeymoon in 2000. He's developed an affection for motorsports. He just opened his

own shop, called **Martin X Motorsports**, just down the street from the Citynet office in Bridgeport. It focuses on utility vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, four-wheelers, motorbikes and scooters.

"I fully support him," Stacy said of her husband's hobbies.

She described Martin as a great father, who is teaching their children the valuable lesson of not being afraid to take a risk.

"That's one thing I've always loved about him. He likes adventures, and he's a risk taker," Stacy said.

Martin is a board member for the **Harrison County Development Authority** and **Bridgeport Country Club**. Citynet has been honored by several organizations, including as Business of the Year by **The Harrison County Chamber of Commerce**.

Martin was selected as a "West Virginia Young Gun" entrepreneur by **West Virginia Executive Magazine**. The **Small Business Administration** named him Young Entrepreneur of the Year.

All of those activities haven't swayed Martin from his core goals. He plans to continue to strive for success at Citynet and grow the company.

"I'll stay in this business for some time," he said. "It's not an easy business to get into because it changes so much."

A great business. A wonderful family. In a state he loves. Forget Beverly Hills. What could be better than that?

"I'm self employed and in control of my own destiny," he said.

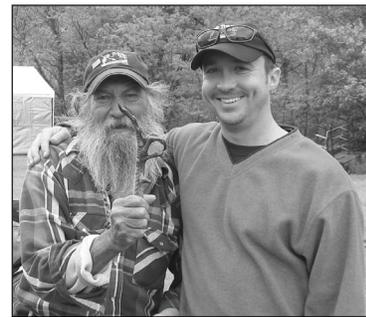


Photo courtesy of Jim Martin

Jim Martin enjoys canoeing and kayaking on some of West Virginia's rivers. He and his friend Buck, left, pose at a campsite along the Potomac River. Buck is holding a turkey claw.