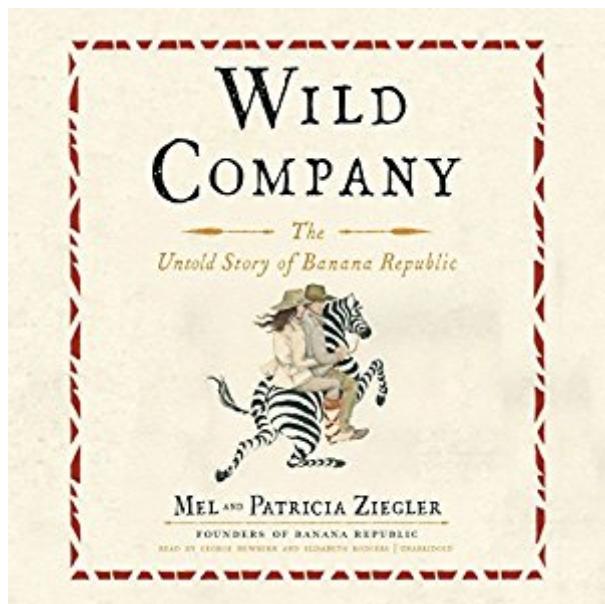


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# Wild Company: The Untold Story Of Banana Republic



## **Synopsis**

With \$1,500 and no business experience, Mel and Patricia Ziegler turned a wild idea into a company that would become the international retail colossus Banana Republic. Reimagining military surplus as safari and expedition wear, the former journalist and artist created a world that captured the zeitgeist for a generation and spoke to the creativity, adventure, and independence in everyone. In a book that's honest, funny, and charming, Mel and Patricia tell in alternating voices how they upended business conventions and survived on their wits and imagination. Many retail and fashion merchants still consider Banana Republic's early heyday to be one of the most remarkable stories in fashion and business history. The couple detail how, as "professional amateurs", they developed the wildly original merchandise and marketing innovations that broke all retail records and produced what has been acclaimed by industry professionals to be "the best catalog of all time". A love story wrapped in a business adventure, Wild Company is a soulful, inspiring tale for listeners determined to create their own destinies with passion for life, work, and fun.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A beautiful book in every way. I would assume that most of us who were Banana Republicans, (doesn't quite work, does it?) know the story or perhaps parts of it. Mel and Patricia Ziegler tell us the rest. I won't go into a synopsis but will instead comment on what made this such a Great Saturday afternoon read...First off major kudos to both Marlyn Dantes for her clean and enticing cover design, mirroring what could be a modern minimalist version of a Banana Republic catalog,

and Ruth Lee-Mui for the book design. The use of 2 different fonts in the copy, serif for Mel's words and sans-serif for Patricia's, worked beautifully and allowed for a fun and enticing read. As a avid reader of each catalogue that came into my mailbox, the stories and art took me to imaginary but real places at a time when I had just returned from a stint in the Peace Corps in West Africa. Interestingly enough, the only way to get clothing there was to have it made. My good buddy, Lambo brought a pair of surplus cargo shorts that we gave to a tailor along with a few yards of British khaki from the market and voila, we had an endless supply of the coolest shorts we could imagine. I "got" Banana Republic from day one and still have those catalogues as well as the inaugural issue of Trips. Remember that?? I had forgotten about it myself until Mel's story on page 171. I search for it in the garage this afternoon and cherish it once again. Truth is, I venture into the BR store at the local mall about once a year, somehow hoping to find something, anything that speaks to the real past. I am sure I am not the only one, just give me a simple die cast Jeep with the BR logo on the door for sale, if not, then a Safari Coat if you please. If you do, I may have a look at your merchandise, but alas the time for Mel and Patricia's Banana Republic is past and I thank them for all they did to bring it to us. As I was reaching the end of Wild Company, the sun was setting and the orange glow on the final pages was in synch with first Mel, and then Patricia's denouement. I almost wanted to read the book all over again, just to relive their adventure one more time. "Choices are hidden in the pace of the day. Intentions are hidden in choices" - Patricia Ziegler. Read this book, if you loved Banana Republic, you will love Wild Company. Wild Company gets the coveted "Boomer Bert Award of Excellence", a true work of art, just as Banana Republic once was...

If fiction, it would be called "magic realism," but "Wild Company" is a real story with a magical plot: Sympathetic characters (two talented, attractive young journalists) struggle against great odds (no money or business experience) to achieve a worthwhile goal (creative and financial independence). The result, readers know going in, is an against-the-grain company called--in one of many inspired moments--"Banana Republic," iconic in its heyday for outfitting a youthful generation in creative style for vicarious safaris. Just how audacious, shaky and danger-filled this sartorial adventure was will entertain readers, ranging from those nostalgic for a rapidly receding era to the newest business school student seeking inspiration for the future. Considering that Mel and Patricia Ziegler quit dream jobs to go into business with no idea what that business might be, "Wild Company" is an aptly titled tale that asks: just how many obstacles can mere love, determination and talent

overcome? And on this safari the endless obstacles are as real and dangerous as Serengeti tigers or crocodiles: floods, deadlines, shysters, burglars, robbers, bank turndowns--all the perils and predators of commerce lined up and waiting. But as in magic fiction, the heroes are given special powers: she is an artist whose eye for fashion is backed by talent with needle and thread as well as pen, capable of re-fashioning short-sleeve Spanish army shirts into must-have haberdashery. His quirky writer's mind thinks outside boxes not yet invented, soaring to dizzying heights in telling catalog readers just how Spain (and other countries) could so err in labeling such treasures "surplus." And of course there's an Open Sesame moment: Mel, on assignment in a far-off land happens to buy a discarded army jacket which Patricia, on seeing a "new Mel" at San Francisco's airport, instantly identifies as the key to their quest. Great read, I loved it--comes at a time when inspiration is needed. #

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