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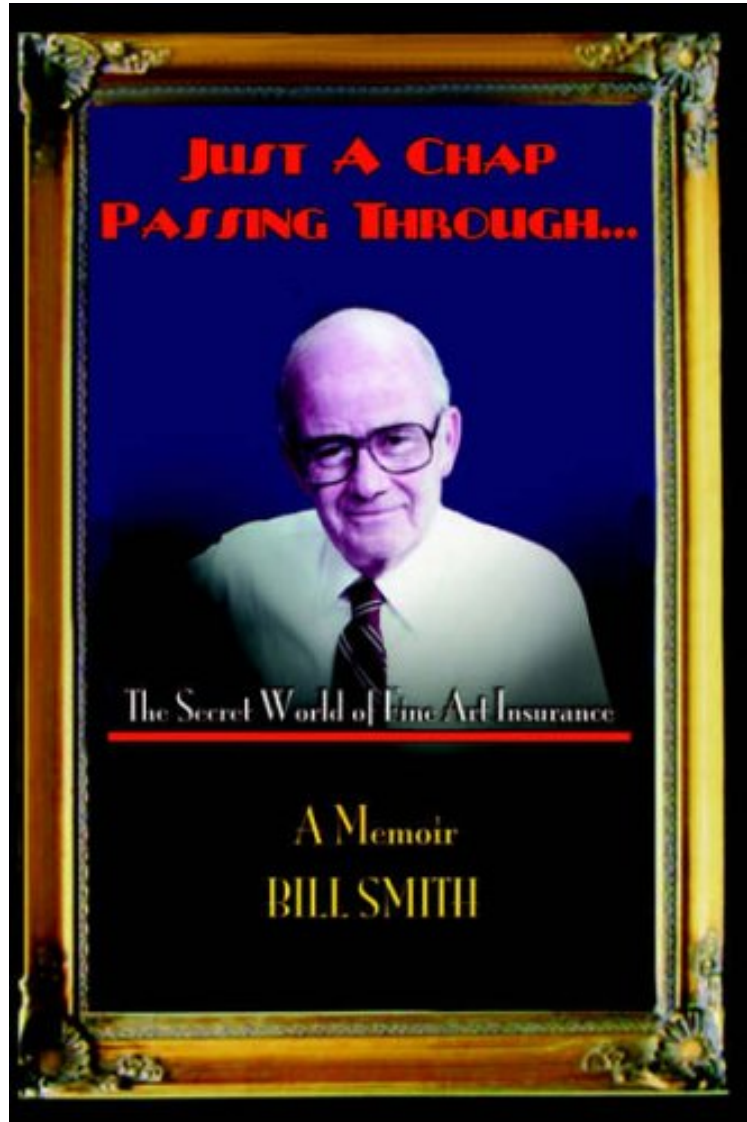
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Just a Chap Passing Through...The Secret World of Fine Art Insurance

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0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. EXCELLENT MEMOIRBy Jack Of AlltradesThis book is a treasure chest of the history of fine art insurance in America and Europe in the last half of the twentieth century. It will be of interest to the entire art community.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very strongly recommended

reading for those interested in the intricate and intriguing world (and underworld) of fine arts
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Just A Chap Passing Through...: The Secret World Of Fine Art Insurance is the inherently fascinating and quite informative autobiography of William F. Smith. A man who lived a life involving museums, collectors, dealers, artists, felons, police, feds, and insurance companies. Bill Smith dealt with the commercial and sometimes shady world of Fine Arts, which brought him into contact with Scotland Yard, Interpol, the FBI, museum directors, curators, and art thieves. That life is showcased in his candid memoir, Just A Chap Passing Through..., and carries his readers through the tales of Smith's colorful career as a premier art adjuster dealing with stolen pieces through the USA and from around the world. Just A Chap Passing Through... is very strongly recommended reading for those interested in the intricate and intriguing world (and underworld) of fine arts.
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The Museums -- The Collectors -- The Dealers -- The Artists -- The Felons -- The Fuzz -- The Feds -- And The Infamous Insurance Companies "For A Chap merely Passing Through, Bill Smith earned the respect, admiration and confidence of museum directors, curators, collectors and artists, as well as Scotland Yard, the FBI and Interpol, for his adjudicative talents, honed to skills by the Jesuits, brilliantly narrated here with his Celtic wit and charm." James B. Byrnes, Director Emeritus, the New Orleans Museum of Art. "He was the most famous adjuster in his field, a wonderful guy, very helpful to people all the time." Steven Weil, scholar emeritus, the Smithsonian Institution. "...Intimately chronicles the humor, grace and compelling humanity of this heretofore unsung hero. His manners, impeccable; his wit, deadly; his eloquence, better than the Blarney Stone; his knowledge of the classics, profound; his caninness, slyer than any fox. The sum; Bill Smith, a rare true gentleman, suavely at home in the infinitely adjustable world of international art theft, quiet collaborator with Interpol and the police and hero of museums, galleries and collectors. Knowing him was like having James Bond for a friend." Vaughn Glasgow, author: The Social History of the American Alligator "He was one of the few people who understood this whole game. There were a handful of us out there who really did this whole thing, all based on the love of the art. He was one of the good guys." Robert Volpe, retired NYPD detective, author: Art Cop

"...insider's view of the art insurance world." -- Night Owl From the Publisher
"There was that saloon where all the abstract artists used to gather, on University Place, the Cedar Tavern. Id heard the stories and I used to go in there from time to time. Id sit and sort of look and listen. Finally one time I said to the bartender, If these walls could talk... He slapped the towel on the bar in disgust. This is not the joint, he said. About two blocks down "Theres a book just came out, reviewed in the current New Criterion, about French art during the occupation. A lot of people dont come out of it too well. They managed to live with it, the whole Nazi business, including Picasso. He had the reputation for somehow being associated with The Resistance, but no one has ever figured out quite how. Ive never liked Picasso, always thought he was a fraud. Ive enjoyed not liking him too, but I wish Id known him personally because Id love to dislike him up close rather than from a distance. To go back Ive always thought that the French do three things: smoke, drink and surrender." "In my bag a large brown GAB envelope with a pad and a photograph of a hideous plastic and aluminum sculpture, Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design. I think the damage either (1) improved it or (2) didnt hurt it. A lonely point of view." "Riding back from an adversarial meeting in the mid-eighties the talk in the cab with my two colleagues continued fractious and I became weary of it. I hoped to improve the atmosphere and I said with what I considered good humor, Thats an uptown number in a downtown conversation It didnt improve the conversation. Mercifully it ended it."
From the Author
"Just in passing, the Argosy Bookstore. A fine shop: prints and maps, out-of-print books, old things, new things and bargains galore. With all that, neat and orderly, tidy shelves, good arrangements, lots of old oak about. Even more, the help is polite and knowledgeable enough. . . Earlier phone call, so am enroute to the Americam Numismatic Society, 15th and Broadway. Armed robbery yesterday, heard about it on the radio last night. " "Never left the office and busy all day. Good busy, not harried. There is indeed a difference. Busy, you control. Harried, you are controlled. Sunday I locked myself in my library and got a lot of paper work behind me. Into the hopper this morning and a good feeling."