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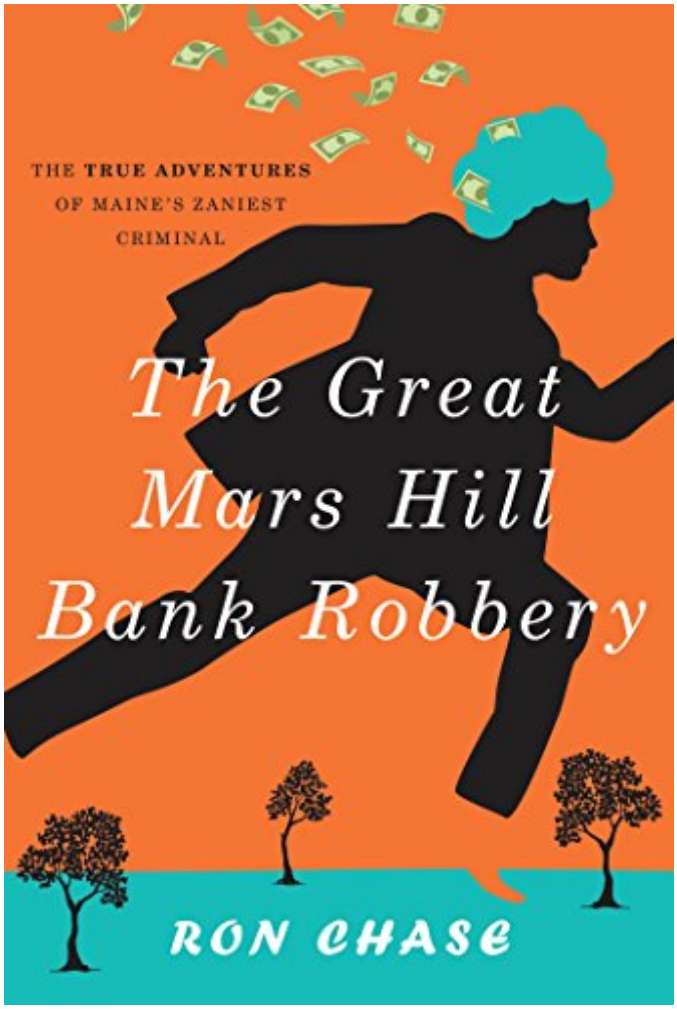
The Great Mars Hill Bank Robbery



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Synopsis

On November 12, 1971, Bernard Patterson, a much decorated Vietnam War hero, turned a real-life version of Don Quixote, Butch Cassidy, and Robin Hood all rolled into one package, robbed the Northern National Bank in Mars Hill, Maine. He escaped with $110,000; at the time, the largest bank robbery in the history of the state. A tunnel rat and paratrooper in Vietnam who rose to the rank of Sergeant, he was awarded four bronze stars and recommended for a silver star for valor. He returned home to northern Maine broke and disillusioned. Wearing dark glasses, dressed in a Marx Brotherâ ™s ankle length coat and wearing a blue wig, he robbed the bank, even though he was recognized by the elderly teller. He initially escaped by paddling a rubber raft down the Prestile Stream. This was the beginning of a comic, outrageous, implausible journey that took him across the United States, then to Europe and North Africa before finally surrendering to authorities in Scotland Yard after he had spent most of the money. Along the way, he lived a raucous life of wine and women while hobnobbing in aristocratic hangouts and giving money to those he perceived to be in need; all the time staying just a heartbeat ahead of law enforcement officials. He motor biked across Europe, hoodwinked border officials, bought a camel and got lost in the North African desert. Returned to the United States for prosecution, he was convicted and imprisoned. Released several years later, he moved back to northern Maine, where he continued to lead a reckless life that included running a â œpot farm,â • until he died at age 56 in 2003. When asked by a friend why he had robbed the bank, he responded, â œthe VA wouldnâ ™t give me a loan, so I decided to take one out on my own.â •

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Customer Reviews

The first time I picked up my kindle to read this book, I put it down after an hour. Getting acquainted with new characters is often slow work, and I had picked up the book to be entertained. The second time I began reading I didn't put it down until I was finished in the wee hours of the morning! The story turned into a â œbarn burnerâ • that I could not put down until Bernard Patterson the lead character in the story is finally arrested. The reward for this effort; I felt both entertained and surprisingly moved by the Great Mars Hill Bank Robbery.Author Ron Chaseâ ™s carefully researched true story of a Vietnam era â œtunnel ratâ •, his return home, and his subsequent robbery of his local bank is a story of sheer mayhem, and youâ ™re along for the ride! The story takes off when decorated paratrooper Sergeant Bernard Patterson requests to return to Vietnam for a third tour of duty. The request is denied by a wary military. As Chase writes â œBernard you see has a historyâ •. Chase, digs into that history filling out the details of Bernardâ ™s early life in rural Maine, and digs even deeper into the reasons why Bernard climbed down into the Viet Congâ ™s turf. Chase follows Bernard down into those tunnels, digs out from old news reports what Bernard said about why he went, and what it was like. When Bernard surfaces from the tunnels and the excesses of wartime leave time in Vietnam, he returns to his unsuspecting hometown, welcomed as a hero. He soon goes broke, and in his words he â œdecides,â • to take out a loanâ •, from the tiny Bank in Mars Hill, Maine.This is a funny and sad telling of the story of how one man copes with his war experience in a very unique way.

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