

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION I

What do Marilyn Monroe, Adolph Hitler, Mickey Mantle, Ronald Reagan, Fran Tarkenton, Howard Hughes, and Tiger Woods have in common? Their autographs all exist in autograph collections. The question is: Are they real or just authentic?

CHAPTER ONE: MY STORY 1

Lured by the appeal of owning a piece of history, the author begins the long process of collecting signatures of the famous in every field. Then he discovers the awful truth about one of his prized autographs – it might not be real. With that discovery, the sweet taste of successful collecting sours quickly as the author enters autograph hell.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY OF AUTOGRAPHS..... 23

Ancient Rome and Athens were hotbeds of autograph and manuscript collecting, and the hobby took off from there. Now autograph collecting is a multi-million dollar industry that has led to bogus products and questionable dealers.

CHAPTER THREE: FAKES OF THE PEN..... 49

If an autograph is worth money, it's worth faking. Throughout history autographs and documents purported to have come from Adolph Hitler, the founders of the Mormon Church, even Jesus Christ himself have found

Table of Contents

their way to market. The sad thing is, they have fooled many, including the experts.

CHAPTER FOUR: COLLECTING REACHES A STANDSTILL! .. 81

Autograph fraud reached a fever pitch in the 1990s, when the market was flooded with schlocky fakes that made millions for those who produced them. Then the FBI jumped in with Operation Bullpen, the big bust that led to the rise of the professional authenticator.

CHAPTER FIVE: AUTHENTICATORS OR OPINIONATORS..... 105

There are hundreds of professional authenticators, all claiming that they can tell if an autograph is real or fake. But what qualifies them to know if an autograph is authentic? Other than having collections of their own, very little, which makes an oxymoron of the job description Expert Authenticator.

CHAPTER SIX: COWBOY-STYLE ETHICS 129

The author and three other noted autograph professionals engage in a free-wheeling conversation about the ups and downs of the autograph business.

CHAPTER SEVEN: BREAKING THE DEALER CODE 159

All of the major autograph dealers and associations have codes of ethics, guidelines by which they assure autograph authenticity. But how viable is The Code? The author comes to a startling conclusion about what these codes really mean and how to make certain your autograph is authentic.