

An Inventory of the James A. Michener Papers, Dennis Cole Collection

Repository: University of Northern Colorado, James A. Michener Library, Archival Services

Collection number: SC 1-07 (formerly Small 1. Bronze Hands of James A. Michener, 1997)

Title: An Inventory of the James A. Michener Papers, Dennis Cole Collection

Author: Inventory prepared by Shirley Soenksen on May 2, 2006.

Dates: 1996-1997

Creator or Collector: Dennis Cole

Size: One sculpture approximately 9"H x 13.5"W x 22"L

Abstract:

One sculpture of the hands of James A. Michener and the front of his manual typewriter.

Scope and Content Note:

The sculpture by Dennis Cole is a life-mold of Michener's hands and the front of his manual typewriter. Michener gave the sculpture the title: "With these two fingers, I typed millions of words."

History Note:

Dennis Cole conceived the idea of creating an impression of Mari Michener's hands the day following her death on September 24, 1994. After receiving permission from James A. Michener for the project, Dennis Cole and his wife, Elizabeth, went to the funeral home and created the molds.

Several months later, Dennis Cole received permission from Michener to make a similar mold of Michener's hands out of bronze. It took Cole three months to create a bronze sculpture showing one of Michener's hands on marble with Mari's hand on top of his.

Approximately one year later, Dennis Cole received permission from Michener to create molds of hands in a typing position. It took Cole nine months to accurately reproduce the typewriter.

Dennis Cole refused to be reimbursed for the sculptures or sell them. Instead, they would be donated to James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania; University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado; and the University of Texas library.

The first bronze sculpture was finished in October 1996. At the memorial service for James A. Michener in Austin, Texas on November 20, 1997, Dennis Cole mentioned to Gary Pitkin, Library Dean, University of Northern Colorado Libraries, that he would donate the sculpture to the University of Northern Colorado.

The sculpture was originally on display in the James A. Michener Library First Floor, 1999. It is now located in the Michener Room.

Biography of James A. Michener:

James Albert Michener was born in 1907 to unknown parents and raised as an orphan in the care of widow Mabel Michener of Doylestown, Pennsylvania. By the time he graduated from high school in 1925, he had visited 45 out of the 48 states. He was given a scholarship to Swarthmore, and after graduating summa cum laude in 1929, he traveled and continued his education at nine universities inside and outside the United States. During this time, he also taught in Pennsylvania, Colorado, and at the Harvard School of Education.

When he was not teaching, Michener worked as a textbook editor in New York, and he joined the British Merchant Marines. During WWII, he joined the Navy, making use of his experience in the British Merchant Marines to climb through the ranks to lieutenant and his knowledge of history to carry out sensitive assignments in the South Pacific. It was this experience that brought about *Tales of the South Pacific* in 1947, which won a Pulitzer Prize. Michener used this novel as the cornerstone of his writing career, publishing almost 50 books in the next 50 years, including *Sayonara*, *Hawaii*, *The Source*, *Iberia*, *Caravans*, *The Covenant*, *Sports in America*, and *Poland*.

In 1977, a four-part public television series called *The World of Michener* covered Israel, Hawaii, Spain, and Poland, just a few of the countries upon which his books have been based. Several other books have been turned into movies or miniseries, and two of his novels have been turned into musicals (most notably *South Pacific*, which won its own Pulitzer Prize).

During the time that he was publishing, however, Michener did not ignore the world around him. He ran for Congress in 1962 and held positions on several committees, including the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, the U.S. Postal Service stamp committee, and an advisory position on a council for NASA. He also spoke often at congressional hearings and at functions of those organizations in which he held particular interest.

James A. Michener died at the age of 90 on October 16, 1997 in Texas, three years after his third wife, Mari Yoriko Sabusawa. He had no children.

Biography of Dennis Cole:

Dennis Cole worked in the prosthetics field for thirty years. His wife, Elizabeth, is a physical therapist.

Arrangement (required for multiple level collections):

This collection is organized into the following series:

Series 1: Bronze hands sculpture

Series 2: Display Items

Restrictions on Access: The collection is open for research.

Restrictions on Use: User is responsible for copyright compliance.

Preferred Citation: [Description of Item], James A. Michener papers (RG SC 1), Collection, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

Locations of Originals (if applicable):

Acquisition Information (if applicable):

The sculpture was a gift from sculptor, Dennis Cole, in 1997.

Subjects:

Michener, James A. (James Albert), 1907-1997
Cole, Dennis

Inventory:

Original finding aid created by Richard Gibboney on March 14, 2000.

Series 1: Bronze hands sculpture

The sculpture by Dennis Cole is a life-mold of Michener's hands and the front of his manual typewriter. Michener gave the sculpture the title: "With these two fingers, I typed millions of words." This sculpture was on display on the first floor in the James A. Michener Library, 1999. The sculpture is now located in the Michener Room.

Series 2: Display Items

In addition to Michener's hands, the following items were used for a display on the first floor of the James A. Michener Library at the University of Northern Colorado:

- Black and white photograph, approx. 5 1/8"x4" with writing on the back that reads, "James A. Michener & Dennis Cole October, 1996."
- Small placard that reads, "With These Two Fingers, I Typed Millions of Words."
- Photocopy of a letter dated 1998 March 17 from Dennis Cole to Gary Pitkin (mounted on cardboard).

Cole also created plaster molds of the hands of both Mari and James A. Michener. They are located in the Home Collection.