

An Inventory of the James A. Michener Papers, James A. Michener Oral History Project

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

Collection number: RG SC 1-63

Title: An Inventory of the James A. Michener Papers, James A. Michener Oral History Project

Author: Inventory prepared by Shirley Soenksen on 2006 August 3; revised 2007 September 17.

Dates: 2001-2002

Creator or Collector: Weir, Georgia (Creator); Baird, Roiann M. (Creator); Pitkin, Gary (Creator); [Rapp?], Lori (Creator)

Size: 1 linear foot

Abstract:

This collection consists of interviews conducted with his former secretary, Nadia Orapchuck in 1999 and several of his lifelong friends in 2003.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection consists of interviews conducted with his former secretary, Nadia Orapchuck in 1999 and several of his lifelong friends in 2003.

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.

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 (SC 1-63), James A. Michener Oral History Project, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

Acquisition Information (if applicable):

Interviews conducted by Georgia Weir in December 2003 and December 2004

Documentation relating to the acquisition is on file in Archives, RG 13 S1 F11-2.

Subjects:

Michener, James A. (James Albert), 1907-1997
 Weir, Georgia
 Baird, Roiann M.
 Pitkin, Gary M., 1947-
 [Rapp?], Lori
 Bloom, Alfred H. III
 Eldridge, Maurice G.
 Katsiff, Bruce
 Landis, Kendall
 Nelson, Paul Erik, 1953-
 Nelson, Helen
 Orapchuck, Nadia.
 Piszek, Janet, 1952-
 Piszek, Bill (William Peter), 1959-
 Piszek, Edward J., 1916-2004.
 Shane, Terry.
 Silverman, Ann, 1921-2007
 Silverman, Herman, 1920?-

Inventory:

Collection	MSS #	Series	Box	Folder	Title
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Folder 0	Finding Aid
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Nadia Orapchuck. Interview. 4-7-99. Cassette.
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Bloom, Alfred and Eldridge, Maurice. Interview. December 15, 2003. Swarthmore, PA.
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Katsiff, Bruce. Interview. December 18, 2003. Doylestown, PA.
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Landis, Kendall. Interview. December 15, 2003. Media, PA.

Collection	MSS #	Series	Box	Folder	Title
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Piszek, Edward J. Interview. December 16, 2003. Ft. Washington, PA (Tape 1).
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Piszek, Edward J. Interview. December 16, 2003. Ft. Washington, PA (Tape 2).
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Piszek, Bill, Nelson, Helen and Nelson, Eric. Interview. Scenes of Piszek Estate. December 16, 2003. Ft. Washington, PA (Tape 1).
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Piszek, Bill, Nelson, Helen and Nelson, Eric. Interview. December 16, 2003. Ft. Washington, PA (Tape 2).
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Pitkin, Gary. Interview. December 9, 2003. Greeley, CO.
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Shane, Terry. Interview. December 15, 2003.
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Silverman, Anne. Interview. December, 18, 2003. Doylestown, PA.
James A. Michener Oral History Project	SC 1-63			Loose	Silverman, Herman. Interview. December 18, 2003.