

**Guide to the Robert Vavra Photographs and Correspondence
Related to James A. Michener, 1965-2005**

Repository: James A. Michener Library, Archival Services Department, University of Northern Colorado, Campus Box 48, Greeley, CO 80639, Phone: (970) 351-2854, E-mail: library.archives@unco.edu, URL: <http://library.unco.edu/archives/>

Collection number: SC1-41

Title: Guide to the Robert Vavra Photographs and Correspondence Related to James A. Michener, 1965-2005

Author: Inventory edited by Jay Trask, July 2009. Originally prepared by Shirley Soenksen on 2007 January 23. This inventory is partly based on an original inventory created in 1999 by Roian Baird and partially processed by Julia Remsik, a graduate assistant, in 2005.

Dates: 1965-2005; bulk 1965-1985.

Creator or Collector: Michener, James A. (James Albert), 1907-1997; Vavra, Robert, 1935- (Creator)

Size: 9.5 linear feet

Scope and Content Note: The collection primarily consists of correspondence between Vavra and Michener, miscellaneous correspondence from fans addressed to Michener, photographic images (negatives and contacts) of Michener, his wife and friends that provide a very candid look at Michener's life, and photographic prints of the images used in the book *Iberia: Spanish Travels and Reflections*. The correspondence concerns a wide variety of topics ranging from publication issues to world travel.

The collection also contains some restricted materials associated with Vavra's book entitled *Michener's the Name*. The materials include negatives, photographs and copies of the manuscript. The restricted material will be available for research in 2011.

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 Robert Vavra: Robert Vavra is an American-born photographer, who is considered to be the world's premier photographer of horses. Vavra was born on March 9, 1935 in Glendale, California. In 1958, with little money and no local contacts, he moved to Seville, Spain to pursue his interest in studying Spanish bulls. Vavra has written over 30 books, and his expertise has been used by a wide-variety of corporations, organizations and individuals ranging from the Walt Disney Company to Bo Derek to the Russian Republic. He has worked within the film industry on such films as Lawrence of Arabia, Patton and The Horse Whisperer.

Vavra met James Michener in Seville, and the two developed a life-long friendship. Vavra often served as Michener's photographer and his photographs illustrated Michener's *Iberia: Spanish Travels and Reflections*.

Arrangement (required for multiple level collections):

The records are arranged into three series. The series are as follows:

- Series 1, Correspondence, 1965-1995
- Series 2, Photographs, ca. 1965-1995
- Series 3, Michener's the Name, ca. 2000-2005

Restrictions on Access: Usage of certain portions of the collection is restricted until 2011. These materials are clearly identified within the finding aid.

Restrictions on Use: None of the material in the collection is within the public domain. Researchers are responsible for ensuring copyright compliance. Please speak with a representative from the Archival Services Department for further information.

Preferred Citation: [Description of Item], Robert Vavra photographs and correspondence related to James A. Michener, 1965-2005 (SC 1-41), Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

Acquisition Information (if applicable):

Purchased from Robert Vavra in 2005-2006

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

Subjects:

- Michener, James A., (James Albert), 1907-1997 -- Correspondence.
- Michener, James A., (James Albert), 1907-1997 -- Photographs.
- Michener, James A., (James Albert), 1907-1997. Iberia.
- Michener, Mari Yoriko Sabusawa, 1920-1994
- Vavra, Robert, 1935- .
- Black-and-White Negatives.
- Contact Sheets.
- Correspondence.
- Michener, James A., (James Albert), 1907-1997 -- Correspondence.
- Michener, James A., (James Albert), 1907-1997 -- Photographs.

Michener, James A., (James Albert), 1907-1997. Iberia.

Subject Terms:

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the University Libraries catalog, the Source. Researchers seeking materials about related subjects, persons, organizations or places should search the catalog using these headings.

Vavra, Robert -- Correspondence.

Vavra, Robert. Michener's the name.

Inventory:

Series 1: Correspondence, 1965-1995

Series scope and content: The series contains correspondence addressed to Robert Vavra from James A. Michener, Mari Michener and Nadia Orapchuck (Mr. Michener's secretary for many year), letters from Robert Vavra addressed to Michener and letters from Michener to John Fulton. These letters contain both personal and professional communication between Michener and Vavra, and specifically detail Vavra's work with Michener on a variety of projects including a great deal of discussion of Michener's Iberia: Spanish Travels and Reflections.

The series also contains selected fan letters addressed to and occasionally answered by Michener. At least one letter dated from 1965 includes attached photographs from members of a rock band called the Peppertones, who appreciated Michener's defense of rock music. The majority of the fan mail dates from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. Vavra intended these letters to comprise a book of fan mail addressed to Michener. The book, however, never went beyond the planning stages.

Box 1 -- Vavra-Michener Correspondence, 1965-1995

Series 2: Photographs, ca. 1965-1995

Series scope and content : The series contains negatives, prints and contact sheets taken by Vavra during his long association with Michener. The eighty-nine prints are the images used in Michener's Iberia: Spanish Travels and Reflections. The approximately 3,000 negatives (and related contact sheets) document Michener's life covering a thirty-five year span.

Box 2 -- Iberia: Photographs

89 photographs of James A. Michener used in the book *Iberia: Spanish Travels and Reflections*

Box 3 -- Iberia: Negatives, Folders 1-134

Box 4 -- Iberia: Contact Sheets, Folders 1-134

Series 3: Michener's the Name ca. 2000-2005

Series scope and content: The series contains the manuscript of Vavra's book, Michener's the Name and negatives and photographs that were used in the book.

Boxes 5-7 to have been transferred to: Oversize shelving, SC 1-49, shelf 5

All materials in this series are restricted until 2011.

Box 5 -- Michener's the Name: Manuscript, Negatives, Images

Folder 1 -- Manuscript: Michener's the Name

Folder 1 -- Manuscript: Michener's the Name

Folder 2 -- Out Takes Negatives

Folder 3 -- Images for Book

Box 6 -- Michener's the Name: Book Cover, Manuscript, Photographs

Box 7 -- Michener's the Name: Photographs

8 color & 37 black/white photographs (11"x17") of James A. Michener used in Vavra's book
Michener's the Name.