

**An Inventory of the James A. Michener Papers, Donald K. Conover Collection**

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

**Collection number:** SC 1-65

**Title:** An Inventory of the James A. Michener Papers, Donald K. Conover Collection

**Author:** Inventory prepared by Shirley Soenksen on 2006 July 12, revised 2006 July 28.

**Dates:** 2002

**Creator or Collector:** Michener, James A. (James Albert), 1907-1997; Conover, Don K.

**Size:** .1 linear foot

**Abstract:**

An eight page typed manuscript used for a presentation that DKC made in 2002 to an unknown group. Handwritten notations in black ink appear in the margins. Several photographs of unidentified individuals are included in this collection as are small advertisements for Legal Spirits Restaurant/Tavern in Easton, Maryland.

**Scope and Content Note:**

An eight page typed manuscript used for a presentation that DKC made in 2002 to an unknown group. Handwritten notations in black ink appear in the margins. Several photographs of unidentified individuals are included in this collection as are small advertisements for Legal Spirits Restaurant/Tavern in Easton, Maryland.

**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 Don K. Conover:**

I was born and raised in Brooklyn New York. After graduating from Poly Prep, where my father was a teacher, I entered Princeton University and graduated in 1953 with a degree in Engineering. Some years later, I was awarded a Sloan Fellowship to attend MIT where I earned an MS degree in Industrial Management.

My first job after college was as an engineer working for General Electric in Schenectady, NY. In 1957, I joined the Western Electric Company where I worked for thirty-seven years. My assignments involved a mix of engineering and manufacturing jobs as I progressed from Engineer to Vice President. While I enjoyed all of my assignments, the last two were special. As Director of Corporate Planning, I was introduced to futurism and had the good fortune to do some work with such notables as Al Toffler and Betty Friedan. Then for the last years of my career, I headed up the Corporate Education organization which, with the merge into AT&T, became the largest such operation in the world, with a staff of 1,200 professionals and teaching operations in over fifty countries.

It was back in Princeton that I first became interested in bullfighting. Years later, a trip to Mexico reawakened that passion and sparked my interest in Spain. A friend steered me to Jim Michener's *IBERIA* which became my guide for many wonderful vacations visiting all the places Jim described so well. During those years I became active in a number of taurine clubs, becoming President of Club Taurino of New York and later of the Taurine Bibliophiles of America for whom I still write a column for their quarterly journal.

In 1993, I wrote a letter to Jim Michener noting that virtually all of the Americans he wrote about in the bullfight chapter of *IBERIA* were also friends of mine and wasn't it about time that he and I become acquainted. He wrote back making special note of the fact that I live in Newtown, PA just a few miles from the George School where he had once been a teacher. Of course by this time, his health was failing, so our friendship was a long distance affair consisting of letters back and forth and sending him video tapes of *encierros* (the running of the bulls) which had been a special experience for him years before in Pamplona. I was instrumental in making him an Honorary Member of the Taurine Bibliophiles of America, and enjoyed being his friend right up to the end.

My wife, Patti, and I still live in Newtown where we enjoy life, gardening, hiking, a variety of civic activities, and trips to interesting places as time and funds permit.

Source: "Don Conover's Biographical Sketch for the James A Michener Society." Used by permission from Don Conover.

**Restrictions on Access:** The collection is open for research.

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**Preferred Citation:** [Description of Item], James A. Michener papers (SC 1-65), Donald Conover Collectio, Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado.

**Acquisition Information (if applicable):**

Gift of Donald K. Conover.

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

**Subjects:**

Michener, James A. (James Albert), 1907-1997  
Conover, Donald K.  
Bullfights

**Inventory:**

DKC. "Tales of Iberia." 2002. 8 page typed manuscript. Place of publication unknown.

According to Gary M. Pitkin, Dean of University Libraries, University of Northern Colorado, this most likely is Donald K. Conover, who gave a presentation at the James A. Michener Society annual conference when it was held in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

"Legal Spirits Restaurant/Tavern. [Easton, MD: Legal Spirits Restaurant/Tavern, 2002]. Advertisement. 5.½"x4.¼." 2 copies.

11 black and white photographs and 2 contact sheets of unidentified individuals, possibly scanned images. Images may be by James A. Michener's official photographer Robert Vavra.