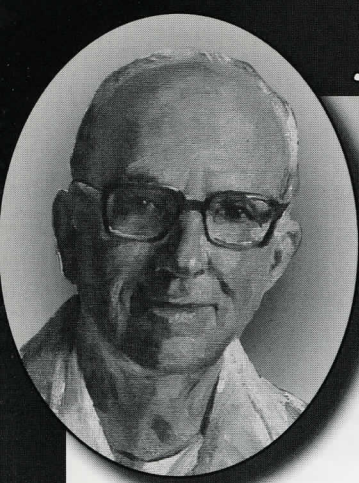


# Newsletter

## James Michener in Miami, 1986-89

By Dr. Patrick A. McCarthy, University of Miami



**I**N 1985, THE president of the University of Miami, Edward T.

Foote II, travelled to Juneau, Alaska, where one of his college roommates ran a charter fishing business. On his friend's boat he met James A. Michener, who was living on location while writing *Alaska*. Intrigued by Michener's remark that he had long thought of writing a novel about the Caribbean, Foote went back home to work on a plan to bring him to Miami. The chance meeting of these two men led to Michener's three-year appointment as distinguished visiting professor at the University of Miami while he wrote *Caribbean* (1989) and to an endowment that has helped to underwrite the University's English department programs in creative writing and Caribbean studies.

From 1986 to 1989 Michener and his wife Mari lived in a modest Coral Gables duplex as *Caribbean* took shape. A suite of offices was renovated for his use in the Ashe Building, which houses administrative and humanities offices, but Michener worked mainly at home, reading countless books from the library's ample Caribbean collection and typing drafts on his manual Royal typewriter. His campus offices were primarily used by his longtime assistant John Kings and by Theresa Potter, who was on loan from the provost's office. Still, Michener was very much a presence at the University.

His appointment required no teaching, but Michener was often a guest speaker in English classes. He was generous with his time in other ways as well: on several occasions he spoke to alumni groups, and he made himself available to graduate students who were interested in fiction writing or the Caribbean, a subject on which he quickly became an expert. Once he agreed to be a featured speaker at a major fund-raising event along with Isaac Bashevis Singer, who held an endowed chair at the University. At the last minute Singer was unable to come, but Michener appeared by himself and fascinated everyone with his stories. On another occasion he took a group of friends from the University to a revival of *South Pacific* starring Robert Goulet. One of his guests was Mary Hope Anderson, then the administrative assistant for the English



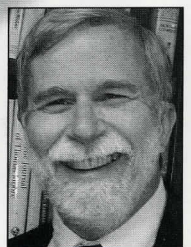
Michener blowing out the candles of his "Caribbean" book-shaped 82nd-birthday cake in Florida, February 3, 1989. Looking on are the photographer's wife, Peggy, and daughter Mariah.

department, who was delighted to be invited backstage after the play. Michener introduced everyone to Goulet and joined him in singing "Brush Up Your Shakespeare," the two mobsters' duet in Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Toward the end of his stay, Michener expressed interest in making a contribution to the University. David Wilson, who was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in the late 1980s, says that rather than funding an endowed chair, Michener wanted to set up an endowment that would help students directly. For several years the Michener endowment contributed to a Caribbean Summer Writers Institute that brought both authors and scholars to Miami. One of the Michener Fellows was Edwidge Danticat, now a widely acclaimed novelist who will return to the University in spring 2008 for a one-semester appointment as Henry King Stanford Professor of the Humanities.

Since 1993 the Michener Endowment has provided stipends for teaching assistantships in the English department's Master of Fine Arts program in creative writing, funding that has drawn competitive applicants internationally. Graduates of the program have gone on to publish books with major presses, to win nationally recognized literary prizes (including the Anhinga Prize for Poetry and the Associated Writing Programs Short Fiction Series Prize), and to hold tenure-track appointments. 📖

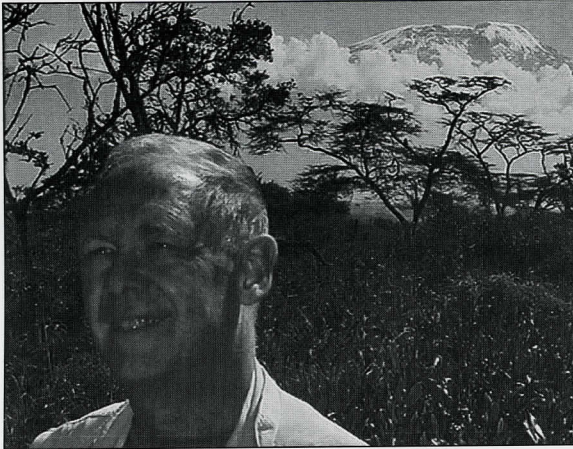
Dr. McCarthy is Chair of the Department of English at the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida. His publications focus on British and Irish modernist writers.



## Ken Frazier, Member Biography

WE NEVER MET, BUT I FELT A PERSONAL CONNECTION with James Michener. I am sure he had the same effect on millions of other readers. His own character shines through his books, one I admire and wish I could emulate: intelligence, love of learning, curiosity about the world, love of travel, deep respect for human culture in all its ebullient diversity, a sense of interwoven connections uniting people, land, and environment over vast time and distance, respect for women, and an uncommon drive and ability to share all this through his fiction.

He has influenced me all my adult life. I grew up in northern Colorado, about twenty miles from Michener's fictional town of Centennial. My mother




KENDRICK FRAZIER, retired editor of the *Sandia Labs News*, Albuquerque, NM, with snow-capped Mount Kilimanjaro.

still lives in Greeley, a few miles from the Michener Library at the University of Northern Colorado, where Michener taught in the 1930s. His novel *Centennial* tells the story of that region, and I have never read a novel that seemed so written for me!

I was editor of *Science News* in Washington for some years, where I also covered the earth sciences. So when Michener begins his novels in ancient geological time, I don't despair; seeing history all the way back to the land's own beginnings is satisfying. I see it that way myself.

Michener was a teacher in the best sense. Through his novels he both entertained and taught us about the world and its people. He accomplished that the way another hero of mine, Isaac Asimov, did in teaching science in essays — by telling human stories in historical order, from the beginning.

When my wife and I went to South Africa in 2003, I immersed myself in *The Covenant*. That story of the settling of the region enriched the experience beyond measure. We had the extraordinary opportunity to hear the two men who broke apartheid and founded South Africa's new democracy — Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk. I wish Michener could update *The Covenant* with those remarkable events. I thought of him constantly while there. We just returned from another trip to Africa, to Tanzania where we spent two days with the Hadza hunter-gatherer people, and I couldn't help thinking of the similar Sans tribe Michener poignantly portrayed in *The Covenant*.

Michener was at home anywhere in the world. Everywhere he went he brought his lively mind and intelligence, and all that he put into his books, a rich heritage for us all. They are filled with treasures to delight and inform for decades to come. 

## Conservation of the Michener Collection of Japanese Prints


By Susan Sayre Batton, Honolulu, Hawaii

SINCE 1992, THE ROBERT F. LANGE FOUNDATION HAS GENEROUSLY supported the conservation of the Honolulu Academy of Art's exceptional Michener Collection of Japanese woodblock prints. Since the project's inception, the collection of over 9,000 prints has been surveyed, removed from acidic mats, and moved into upgraded flat files. Over 5283 prints have been conserved, allowing the exhibition and publication of many rare and important prints.

In honor of the Lange Foundation's dedication to the protection and preservation of woodblock prints, an annual exhibition showcasing print conservation and connoisseurship issues is held in the James A. Michener Gallery at the Academy of Arts. The 2006 conservation-themed print exhibition, the fifth exhibition in the series, was titled *Original Intent: The Aesthetics of Condition*, and was on display from November 21 to January 21, 2007.

*Original Intent* highlighted works by Okumura Masanobu (1686–1764) and other early print makers. Their prints profoundly influenced the development of full-color printing in the Edo period (1615–1868) and exemplify a full range of printing techniques and the use of new media. This exhibition illustrated typical issues in the conservation of prints that have unstable media, fugitive color, poor quality backing, previous treatment, and inappropriate cosmetic repair. By looking at the creative contributions of some of the major ukiyo-e artists we can gain a better understanding of the range of complexities presented to the conservator of Japanese woodblock prints.

Since the late seventeenth century, color has been an important element of Japanese woodblock prints. However, many of the early pigments are inherently unstable and can change in hue or value when exposed to light, air, and moisture. This is especially problematic regarding design aesthetics that depend on the interplay of color. Safe and effective conservation treatment often relies on the identification of colorants, but Japanese print media can prove challenging to the conservator. The Academy's ongoing research on pigment identification and stability hopes to add to the body of worldwide Japanese print scholarship.

The Honolulu Academy of Arts is grateful to the Robert F. Lange Foundation for its support for the conservation and preservation of the Michener Collection. 



Style of Torii Kiyomasa II (mid 1720s–early 1760s)  
“Komachi Among the Tombs.”  
Japan, Edo period, early 1730s.  
Hand-colored woodblock print after conservation; Michener Collection. (Courtesy of the Honolulu Academy of Arts)

# The Robert Vavra Exhibit


By Kacy Guill, Greeley, Colorado

ON FEBRUARY 2, THE DAY BEFORE WHAT WOULD HAVE been James Michener's one-hundredth birthday, the University of Northern Colorado kicked off the year-long James A. Michener Centennial Celebration with the opening of "Robert Vavra Presents James A. Michener." The exhibit included forty-four black and white photographs of James Michener taken by Robert Vavra between 1965 and 1997. The photographs depicted Michener writing and reading, Michener with his wife Mari, Michener in Spain while writing *Iberia*, Michener relaxing at home, Michener with his dogs, and Michener enjoying nature. The photographs were supplemented with quotes from Michener's letters written during that time.

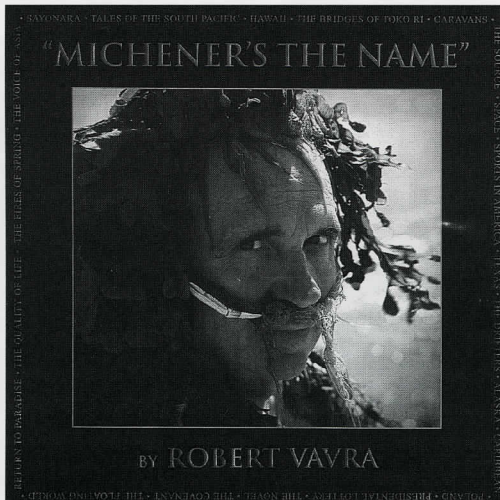
The opening was well attended. Gary Pitkin, Dean of the University Libraries, spoke, and although Robert Vavra was unable to attend, he sent a video showing him speak about his memories of James Michener.

The opening also marked the debut of Robert Vavra's new book, *Michener's The Name*, which was sold during the event. The 204-page hardcover book, published by the University Press of Colorado,

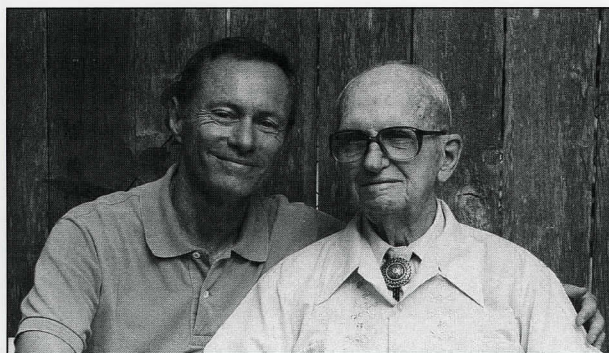
includes more photographs taken of James Michener, many showing Michener

much more informally than he was normally seen. Also included are some of the hundreds of letters Michener wrote to Vavra during their thirty-five year friendship. 

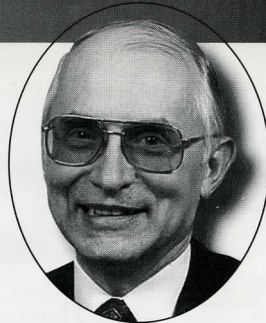
Kacy Guill is Head of Archival Services, James A. Michener Library, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639, and also is our Society Historian.



The book cover showing Jim Michener dressed convincingly as Neptune in seaweed during a beach party in Portugal. (Courtesy UNC archives)



Vavra, left, and Michener in Spain. (Courtesy UNC archives)



James A. Michener


## President's Message

By Ed Cowman

THE READER, UNLESS SEEING OUR NEWSLETTER FOR the first time, will undoubtedly notice the changed appearance and length of this issue; my comments will offer an explanation necessitating this change.

Last year it became apparent that it would no longer be possible to meet the cost of publication of our Newsletter in the form to which we have become accustomed. The simple fact of the matter is that the revenue from current membership dues is inadequate. Dues and gifts are needed for Newsletter publication since the Society does not obtain any funding from the Michener estate and must raise its own funds for its activities.

At least four possible solutions to this dilemma quickly come to mind: 1) increase the cost of dues, 2) solicit donations, 3) increase the number of members, 4) some combination of the first three ideas. Considering the modest size of our Newsletter, the fact that there are only two issues per year and that the Newsletter is perhaps the only tangible benefit of Society membership, solution "1" seemed inappropriate. While solution "2" might provide a short term fix, would it be seemly to ask for support for an enterprise that is currently not self-supporting? And almost from inception we have struggled with finding ways to reach, recruit, and retain new members. We know there are tens of thousands of Michener readers out there, but so far we have been unable to include them in Society membership.

Earlier this year your Executive Board approved a short-term solution to our problem. You hold evidence of that solution in your hands—a publication for which production costs can just be supported by current membership dues. We believe you will find that only the appearance, not the content, has changed. Many Board members believe that the Society should produce a larger, quarterly newsletter—that this change would lead to a larger and growing membership. This and other options will be considered. If stable, the current membership dues can support this Newsletter indefinitely. However, it is almost certain that without a greater volunteer effort and without a growing membership, an expanded publication of the Newsletter will not be viable and this jeopardizes achieving a major goal of the Society: communication and perpetuation of the Michener legacy. 

Ed Cowman

**From Treasurer, Dick Boera:** I recently sent to our e-mail membership network a Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet for the fiscal/calendar year 2006 which explains this less expensive Newsletter format. E-mail me at boerad@charter.net for another copy, or mail a request to me at P.O. Box 1126, Lyndonville, VT 05851, and I'll send a printed copy to you.

# 2007 Calendar of Events

Celebrating James A. Michener's 100th Birthday

**University of Northern CO**, Greeley, CO  
Robert Vavra Presents Michener exhibit Jan. 10 - Feb. 14  
Release of Vavra/Michener book Feb. 2  
Documentary film release: *James A. Michener: Inside Out*  
Various events ([www.library.unco.edu/2007celebration](http://www.library.unco.edu/2007celebration)) or  
contact Kacy Guill (970) 351-2322 To Oct. 6

**University of Texas - Austin** Feb. 2  
Blanton Art Museum Party, Michener Gallery: Director  
Magnuson reads Michener, 6 MFA Michener endowed stu-  
dents read. Contact Marla Aiken, (512) 471-1601

**Random House Publishers**, New York  
Reissue of Michener's *The World is My Home*. Jan. 30  
Reissue of Michener's *Centennial* May 29

**James A. Michener Art Museum**, Doylestown, PA  
"Citizen/Traveler/Writer" exhibit Mar. 3 - July 8  
Contact Emily Irwin, (267) 253-9303

**Michener Elder Hostel** June 3-8  
Contact Laurie Guthmann, (970) 330-4060

**UCLA**, Los Angeles, CA, Powell Library Mar. 5 - Apr. 30  
Lawrence Grobel exhibit of 17-year friendship with JAM.  
Also see Grobel article on JAM in the April *Autograph Collec-  
tor*. Contact Catherine Brown, 310-206-4608

**Lincoln Center**, New York To Be Announced  
*South Pacific* (the musical). Barbara Carroll, [carroll@lct.org](mailto:carroll@lct.org)

**Sheldon Jackson College**, Sitka, AK June - Aug.  
Tours of the Michener bungalow; display of Michener photo-  
graphs and documents from *Alaska*. Contact Straton Library,  
(907) 747-5259

**James A. Michener Society** Annual Meeting Oct. 5-6  
UNC, Greeley, CO: discussion of *Centennial*; a bus tour of  
the Pawnee Grasslands *Centennial* film set; the opening of the  
permanent Michener exhibit space; a book fair with Owen  
Laster; closing banquet. Contact Cowman, (815) 235-2591

**Honolulu Academy of Arts**, Hawaii  
Two Michener Collection Japanese wood- July 24- Sept. 30  
block print exhibits plus archival Oct. 2 - Nov. 25  
photographs: Contact Sawako Chang, (810) 532-3656

**University of Miami**, FL Nov. 1-3  
Michener commemoration during the Caribbean Literary  
Studies International Conference. Contact Sandra Paquet,  
[spaquet@miami.edu](mailto:spaquet@miami.edu).

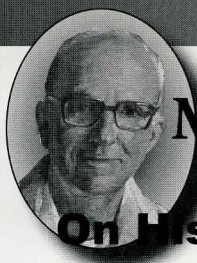
**Talbot Free Library**, Easton, MD Summer  
Reading of Michener's *Chesapeake*; display of the Michener  
archive papers; local television coverage. Contact Monique  
Gordy, (410) 822-1626

**Swarthmore College**, Swarthmore, PA Planning Phase

**Hill School**, Doylestown, PA Planning Phase  
Contact Kathy Skitko, (610) 326-1000

**George School**, Newton, PA Planning Phase  
Contact Odie Lefever, (215) 579-6565

**Library of Congress**, Washington, DC No Plans Issued



## Miscellany

By Richard Gibboney

### On His Childhood

"I have no idea who I am... I know what I was told, that I was a found-ling."

"James Michener, Author of Novels ... Is Dead," Albin Krebs, *The New York Times*, October 17, 1997, pB8

"It's very obscure. We really don't know what the facts are. I was never legally adopted. All I know is when you're in that situation, two ugly moments come later in life: when you want to get a passport and you have no documentation of any kind and when you're drafted into the Army."

"Portrait of an 'average' guy," Melissa Sones, *Honolulu Advertiser*, January 27, 1986, pD1

**JOIN THE SOCIETY!**  
Annual dues, \$12 individual or \$18 couples, are payable by each January to:  
Dick Boera, Treasurer, PO Box 1126  
Lyndonville, VT 05851-1126

## From Your Secretary:

### Welcome New Members!

John H. Brubaker, Lancaster, PA  
Don C. Craig, Hinkley, IL  
Tyler Cowman, Freeport, IL  
Rodger Dourte, Manheim, PA  
J. & V. Downs, Lyndon Center, VT  
Kendrick Frazier, Albuquerque, NM  
Erika Jaeger-Smith, Doylestown, PA  
Elizabeth Nash, Aurora, OH  
John C. Pittenger, Lancaster, PA  
Nels & Peggy Runger, Yardley, PA  
Ken D. Simon Jr., Richland, WA  
Ann S. Simpson, Cody, WY  
D. & S. Smith, Centennial, CO  
Susie Turner, Albuquerque, NM

### Institutional Members

Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA  
Talbot County Free Lib., Easton, MD

### In Memoriam

Art Buchwald, Washington, DC

## JAMES A. MICHENER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

### Elected Board Members

President—  
Ed Cowman, Freeport, IL  
Vice-President—  
Bill Nash, Akron, OH  
Secretary—  
Joy V. Bliss, Albuquerque, NM  
Treasurer—  
A. Richard Boera, Lyndonville, VT  
Directors—  
Mercer Bristow, State College, PA  
Don Conover, Newtown, PA  
John Dietz, Greeley, CO  
Arthur Giffin, Castle Rock, CO  
David Groseclose, Phoenix, AZ  
Robert Guthmann, Greeley, CO  
Gary Pitkin, Advisor, Greeley, CO

Nominating Committee—  
Deborah Brothers, Austin, TX  
Susan J. Dillon, Austin, TX  
Shirley Kings, Austin, TX

### Appointed Officers

Parliamentarian—  
Dorothy Roberts, Greeley, CO  
Historian—  
Kacy Guill, UNC, Greeley, CO

### Honorary Directors

Deborah Brothers, Austin, TX  
Walter Cronkite, New York, NY  
Owen Laster, New York, NY  
Stan Musial, St. Louis, MO

**Michener Society Membership**  
Applications may be obtained from:  
Joy V. Bliss, Secretary  
1108 Rocky Point Ct. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87123-1952  
or [www.michenersociety.com](http://www.michenersociety.com).

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The editors welcome submissions which should be sent to The Book Stops Here. Should a submission be selected for publication, it is subject to editing for length and suitability.

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