



## Michener's South Pacific

*Stephen J. May*

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When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, James A. Michener was an obscure textbook editor working in New York. Within three years, he was a naval officer stationed in the South Pacific. By the end of the decade, he was an accomplished author, well on the way to worldwide fame.

Michener's first novel, *Tales of the South Pacific*, won the Pulitzer Prize. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein used it as the basis for the Broadway musical *South Pacific*, which also won the Pulitzer. How this all came to be is the subject of Stephen May's *Michener's South Pacific*.

An award-winning biographer of Michener, May was a featured interviewee on the fiftieth-anniversary DVD release of the film version of the musical. During taping, he realized there was much he didn't know about how Michener's experiences in the South Pacific shaped the man and led to his early work.

May delves deeply into this formative and turbulent period in Michener's life and career, using letters, journal entries, and naval records to examine how a reserved, middle-aged lieutenant known as "Prof" to his fellow officers became one of the most successful writers of the twentieth century.

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