

## ABOUT DWIGHT AND ARDIS MICHENER

DWIGHT W. MICHENER AND ARDIS ROBERTS MICHENER were life-long members of the Society of Friends. They met at William Penn College, Oskaloosa, Iowa. Throughout their lives, Dwight and Ardis embraced the William Penn College ideals of equal access without discrimination to race, gender, age, religion, or national origin. Social Concerns and support of Quakerism would remain a burning passion throughout their lives.

In 1941 Dwight and Ardis worked for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Marseille, France, as financial managers for “money transfers” to “suffering France.” They managed the office that supervised programs that included feeding children, vitamin distribution, milk distribution, emigration, relief work, village reconstruction, and farm projects to name a few. 23,961,244 French francs were gifted. When the US entered the war, the AFSC asked all volunteers with children to return home, so the Micheners returned to New Jersey to be with their daughter, Jean, who had spent her sophomore year at Westtown School while her parents were in France. The AFSC report (AFSC.org) of this project includes letters and drawings sent to Dwight and Ardis and other volunteers from the French children.

After returning to the States, Dwight and Ardis were asked by AFSC to help raise morale in some of the Civilian Public Service (CPS) Camps by visiting conscientious objectors. COs who worked for peace and opposed war were assigned to work on farms, in hospitals, and mental institutions, or were imprisoned. In 1947 the men listed affiliation with 231 denominations, the majority from peace churches. Many were exposed to harsh treatment and required support. Many suffered from PTSD. Dwight and Ardis did what they could to encourage them in their service.

While Dwight’s career as an economist was at Chase Manhattan Bank, Ardis was an ardent volunteer, working for numerous Friends concerns and devoting much time to the Girl Scouts. They both were very involved in Montclair Monthly Meeting and in the Cape May Conference (later Friends General Conference). In 1955 they hosted two of the 25

Hiroshima Maidens who came to New York for reconstructive surgeries. “The rejuvenation of these young women [is] scarcely referenced in... archival documents available at Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College....as it was taken for granted that Quakers would help.” (Annie Devon Kramer, Stanford University).

In mid-20th century, the Micheners bought a home on the edge of Lake-Walk-in-Water, Florida started a Friends worship group there, and invited many renowned Friends to visit. Feeling strongly about helping the fledgling Southeastern Friends Conference, Dwight and Ardis invited guests to present lectures, arranging location and hospitality. All Meetings were invited. This became known as the Michener Lecture, and in due time outgrew the Lodge on Avon Lake and was moved to the Orlando Meeting House with the annual date becoming the First Day of Martin Luther King weekend and under the care of the now incorporated Southeastern Yearly Meeting.

Fortunately for Southeastern Yearly Meeting, daughter Jean Michener Nicholson, Westtown School and Swarthmore College schoolmate of Cathy Jones Gaskill, a member of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, determined this tradition should continue to enrich Southeastern Quakers in Florida, southern Georgia, and coastal South Carolina by arranging an endowment, a permanently restricted investment to help fund a lecturers’ expenses and to publish the lectures. Commencing in 1970, there have been continuous Michener Lectures now known as the Dwight and Ardis Michener Memorial Lecture under the care of the SEYM.

—Lyn Cope, edited by Judy Nicholson Asselin

## **Resources:**

Interviews with Cathy Gaskill, Jean Michener Nicholson, and  
Judy Nicholson Asslin  
SEYM, AFSC, and *Friends Journal records and archives*.

## **Websites of interest:**

William Penn University  
American Friends Service Committee  
Friends World Committee of Consultation  
Southeastern Yearly Meeting