

# Ruth Mountaingrove papers, 1950-1999

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Mountaingrove, Ruth
<b>Title</b>	<a href="#">Ruth Mountaingrove papers</a>
<b>Dates</b>	1950-1999 (inclusive) 1950 1999
<b>Quantity</b>	42.5 linear feet, (119 containers)
<b>Collection Number</b>	Coll 309
<b>Summary</b>	Ruth Mountaingrove (1923- ) is a feminist, lesbian, writer, publisher and photographer who lived and worked with many of the intentional communities of Southern Oregon. Mountaingrove has published poetry, articles, photographs and feminist/lesbian magazines. This collection contains correspondence, diaries, manuscripts, music, publishing material and photographs. The Photograph Series in particular captures a wide variety of subjects, moods and activities through ceremonies, rituals and daily life inside the intentional communities of Oregon and elsewhere.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives.</a> UO Libraries--SCUA 1299 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-1299 Telephone: 541-346-3068 <a href="mailto:spcarref@uoregon.edu">spcarref@uoregon.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	Collection is open to the public. Collection must be used in Special Collections and University Archives Reading Room. Collection or parts of collection may be stored offsite. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives in advance of your visit to allow for transportation time. Collection includes sound recordings, moving images, and digital files to which access is restricted. Access to these materials is governed by repository policy and may require the production of listening or viewing copies. Researchers requiring access must notify Special Collections and University Archives in advance and pay fees for reproduction services as necessary.
<b>Additional Reference Guides</b>	<a href="#">See the Current Collection Guide for detailed description and requesting options.</a>
<b>Languages</b>	English

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## Historical Note

Ruth Mountaingrove was born February 21, 1923 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Edith Shelling and Herbert Daniel Shook. Ruth graduated from Kutztown State Teacher's College in 1945 with a BS in Education, majoring in Science with minors in Spanish and English. In 1946 Ruth married Bern Ikeler

and together they had 5 children. Also in 1946, Ruth published her first book of poetry titled *Rhythms of Spring*. After nineteen years of marriage, Ruth divorced Bern in 1965. Many years later Ruth continued her education at Humboldt State University, in Arcata, California, where she studied photography and received a Masters of Fine Arts in 1990 at the age of 68.

During the 1960's Ruth became aware of her feminism and lesbianism and in 1970 she met her future partner Jean. After a lengthy custody battle over one of her children, Ruth and several other women caravanned across the U.S. to southern Oregon, where Ruth joined Jean. Ruth and Jean took the last name of Mountaingrove after the intentional community Mountain Grove, where they had lived for several years after moving to Oregon. The Mountaingroves subsequently moved to Golden, a gay commune, where they began publishing *WomenSpirit*, a magazine about feminism and spirituality. In 1978, Ruth and Jean purchased their own land near Wolf Creek, Oregon, called "Rootworks." The Mountaingroves lived together at Rootworks until 1985 when they separated and Ruth then moved to Arcata, California where she enrolled at Humboldt State University.

When Ruth moved to Oregon she began to document the daily life of the communities in which she participated. The photographs included in this collection cover a wide range of subjects, activities and moods in the lesbian intentional communities. They serve as a powerful visual record of both the mundane and the transcendent moments she shared with other women. A technically and artistically accomplished photographer, Ruth worked primarily in black and white, and was interested in exploring photography as an abstract artistic medium. Ruth also shared her love of photography with many of the women she met, especially through the Women's Ovular Photography Workshops.

Ruth Mountaingrove is an artist and writer, a publisher of poetry, articles, songbooks, photography and women's/lesbian magazines and circulars. She has held exhibitions of her photography in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, California, Texas, Washington, and Oregon.

Ruth continues to live in Arcata, California where she is still active in the community and busy with her art and photography.

## Content Description

The Ruth Mountaingrove collection offers researchers a rich resource into the motivations, struggles and daily life in feminist and lesbian intentional communities in Oregon. This collection documents the creative determinations of these women through multiple avenues including writing, publishing, music and photography.

Series I: Correspondence includes incoming and outgoing letters, both personal and business related from 1946 – 1998. Incoming and outgoing correspondence is arranged alphabetically by last name (or first name if no last name is found). Some correspondents have their own folders when the volume of correspondence warrants it, while letter folders (eg. "D") contain many correspondents with first or last names beginning with that letter. The third subseries contains correspondents other than Ruth Mountaingrove and unknown or unintelligible correspondents. See also the Series IX: *New Woman Press*, X: *Blatent Image*, and XI: *Ovular Workshops* for content specific correspondence.

Series II: *Diaries, Journals and Appointment Books* contains diaries, journals and appointment books by Ruth Mountaingrove. There are a total of 40 diaries arranged by date (1958 – 1999) within 15 boxes. The strength of this series lies in Ruth's almost weekly entries during the years 1980 – 1999. The entries are of a personal and a professional nature. The journals and appointment books are mostly very small little notepads full of notes, appointments and some writings – including personal reflections and poetry. The entire date range of this series is 1958 – 1999.

Series III: Literary Manuscripts: The first four subseries (A-D) consist of manuscripts written by Ruth Mountaingrove and include published and unpublished full length and fragments of poetry, short stories, essays, notes and ideas, and dream narratives. They are arranged alphabetically by title. The remaining subseries E contains of various types of manuscripts written by other authors.

Series IV: Personal and Financial Information contains personal records, tax and banking information and other financial records of Ruth Mountaingrove, Jean Mountaingrove, and Ruth's former husband Bernard Ikeler. This series does not contain financial records of any of the intentional communities where Ruth lived. Highlights of this series are Ruth Mountaingrove's personal timeline covering the years 1970 – 1985 and lease and other agreements between Ruth and Jean Mountaingrove covering photographs and property. Please see also Series IX: New Woman Press, Series X: The Blatent Image, and Series XI: Ovular Workshops for more financial records that are specific to those subjects.

Series V: Music is comprised of music, songbooks, music festival and recording information. The first two subseries are separated into two categories: music written by Ruth Moutaingrove and music written by others. Subseries C-D includes drafts, submissions and final copies of the Turned on Woman Songbook and the Womenspirit Songbook. Subseries E includes information about music festivals and Subseries F contains other music publications. Subseries G contains various recording related documents.

Series VI: Art and Photography collects together Ruth's photography catalogues, notes and receipts, and lists of her donated photographs, contact sheets and negatives. Also included are flyers and speech drafts for Ruth's photography exhibits, other photographic information and some drawings. There are no actual photographs in this series. See Series XVI: Photographs for the actual prints and negatives.

Series VII: Publications is a collection of mostly lesbian, feminist and women's publications, and is organized alphabetically by title. Some of Ruth's published letters, articles, photographs and poetry can be found in these publications.

Series VIII: Ephemera is a very important series for research into communications among women, women's groups, lesbian individuals and groups, and intentional communities. The material consists of flyers, brochures, newsletters and invitations and they are organized alphabetically.

Series IX: New Woman Press is comprised of the working materials generated by New Woman Press, a publishing company started by Ruth and her co-publishers at Rootworks. Material includes correspondence, financial and business information.

Series X: The Blatent Image is a publication begun by Ruth with the help of Tee Corinne and others that published images and stories that partly came out of the Women's Ovular Photography Workshops. Subseries A contains correspondence from participants of the Ovular Workshops and submissions to the publication. Subseries B includes the financial and business part of the series. Subseries C includes drafts and final versions of the publication.

Series XI: Ovular Workshops contains the correspondence, business information, working papers, newspaper clippings and contact listings from the women's photograph workshops which Ruth Mountaingrove and others ran for six years at Rootworks. Some photographs from those workshops can be found in various publications in Series VII: Publications, and Series X: The Blatent Image. Many of the original contact sheets, negatives, slides and photographs from these workshops are listed under Series XVI: Photographs.

Series XII: New Hope Workshop was a group Ruth worked with in New Hope, Pennsylvania. Material consists of notes, press releases, newsletters and draft material.

Series XIII: Newspaper Clippings/Articles contains articles that mention Ruth and/or Jean Mountaingrove, the Ovular Workshops, intentional communities, Ruth's photography and other related subjects. Material is arranged by date.

Series XIV: Yearbooks and Scrapbooks consists of yearbooks from Ruth's college education and scrapbooks put together by Ruth.

Series XV: Oversize contains oversize drawings, songbook covers, publications and posters.

Series XVI: Photographs contains photographs, contact sheets, negatives and slides. Subseries are organized by type (eg. negative, slide, contact sheet) and then within type by size (eg. 8x10, 5x7). Color photographs are separated from black and white photographs. The photographer is also named whenever possible. The bulk of the photographs depict daily and ceremonial life on lesbian lands, and the photographers and subjects taking part in the Women's Photography Ovulars.

Subseries A contains binders of photographs, negatives and contact sheets; Ruth's original arrangement and numbering scheme was preserved.

Subseries B includes negatives and slides. Boxes 26 – 29 are 4x5 slides kept in Ruth's original alphabetical/subject order.

Subseries C-D are contact sheets that are separated into black and white and color categories.

Subseries E-J contains photographs that are separated by size (8x10, 5x7, and small) and color.

Subseries K consists of two different photo notebooks.

Subseries L contains Ruth Mountaingrove's exhibit prints.

Series XVII: Audio and Video contains compact disk recordings of Ruth reciting her poetry, singing songs, and one disk contains jpeg pictures of a photograph exhibit.

## Administrative Information

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Description

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[Guide to the Ruth Mountaingrove Papers](#)

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## Names and Subjects

### Subject Terms :

Communal living--Oregon

Lesbian community--Oregon

Lesbian community--United States

Women photographers--United States

### Personal Names :

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Corinne, Tee, 1943-2006  
Mountaingrove, Jean  
Mountaingrove, Ruth

Rebecca Sprinson, Linda Long, Tanya Parlet, and Cassandra A. Schmitt  
2011



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