

Repository

LGBTQ Religious Archives Network

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/>

Title

Ruth Barrett Oral History Interview and Transcript

Date

November 28, 2004

Extant

1 hour 15 minutes interview (two files) and 1 transcript

Abstract

Ruth Barrett discusses her childhood experience with religion, her involvement with early Dianic movements led by Z Budapest, coming out as a lesbian, and her current involvement with Dianic religious practices.

Biographical

Ruth Barrett was born in 1954 in Los Angeles to a devout Jewish family deeply involved in the founding of the Reconstructionist movement in Judaism. This creative religious environment launched Ruth in her own journey to find a meaningful experience of the divine. In 11th Grade, her classmate Mark Simos (brother of Mimi Simos, now Starhawk) told her about the Robert Graves book, *The White Goddess*. At that time, Ruth was playing folk music and performing at the Renaissance Faire. In 1970 or 1971, she met Natasha Faust (now Shekhinah Mountainwater), another woman studying and practicing feminist goddess rituals. With a common interest in goddess worship, she decided to study folklore at the University of California, Santa Cruz. In 1975-1976 while at Santa Cruz, she met weekly with a group of women studying goddess spirituality at Shekhinah's home in the mountains. She also continued her musical performances and married.

She met Z Budapest in 1976 and was initiated into the Susan B. Anthony Coven Number One on Bridget's Day in 1977. Her daughter was born on Autumn Equinox the following year. She began the feminist newspaper *Themis* (later *Thesmophoria*) and continued her performing and spiritual practices. She and musician Kay Gardner met at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, and became close friends through performing goddess music. They maintained this friendship until Kay's death.

In 1981, when Z Budapest moved to northern California, Ruth became the high priestess of the Susan B. Anthony Coven. Although the covens divided, Ruth Barrett continued to celebrate Sabbats in the Los Angeles area uninterrupted until she left in 2000. After the first coven divided, Ruth presided over rituals for the Moon Birch Coven and began teaching feminist witchcraft in the Los Angeles area. As the coven grew, it was renamed the Moon Birch Grove. Ruth came out as a lesbian during 1984 and 1985. She divorced her husband, supporting herself and her daughter through teaching and performing. She left Moon Birch Grove in 1988 to form the Circle of Aradia. This circle began to meet in Topanga Canyon; its ceremonies had between 100 and 200 women. Neither lesbian nor heterosexual women dominated the circle. Ruth was honored as the recipient of the 1997 L.A.C.E. award for outstanding contributions in the area of Spirituality from the Gay and Lesbian Center in Los Angeles.

In 1993, the Circle of Aradia became the first consecrated circle of the Reformed Congregation of the Goddess (RCG), a loose confederation of women's spirituality organizations with multiple understandings of Dianic Wicca. Ruth attended RCG Conferences, and became a partner to Falcon River. They moved to Evansville, Wisconsin in 2000 and founded the Temple of Diana, which continues the tradition of Wicca that Ruth was taught by Z Budapest and had taught for twenty years. They founded The Spiral Door Women's Mystery School of Magic and Ritual Arts and incorporated it to perpetuate the Z Budapest line of Wicca. Ruth currently performs and sells goddess music, teaches at The Spiral Door, and lives with her partner Falcon.

This interview was conducted by Doris Malkmus, as archivist for a LGBTQ-RAN oral history project. She earned a Ph.D. in history at the University of Iowa and an M.S. in Archival Science from the University of Michigan.

Scope and Content

Ruth Barrett is an ordained elder Priestess in the Dianic tradition, and female rights activist, she was involved in the beginnings of the Dianaic church and continues to speak out for women's rights and freedom from gender oppression. Barrett discusses her childhood experience with developing her own religion, her involvement with early Dianic movements led by Z Budapest, her eventual coming out as a lesbian, and her current involvement with the movement.

Access

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/ruth-barrett>

Reproduction and Use

LGBTQ Religious Archives Network owns the copyright and allows personal, educational, and other non-commercial uses of the Content according to its stated Terms of Use:

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/terms-of-use>.

Languages

Collection material is in English

Cite as

“Ruth Barrett | Oral History”, LGBTQ Religious Archives Network,
<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/ruth-barrett>.

Digital finding aid created by Sarah McCall, 2023

Tags

WICCAN

Women's spirituality

Budapest, Z

Reformed Congregation of the Goddess

Feminism

Women and Religion

Barrett, Ruth