

B.C. Midwifery Collection / Megan Davies (Collector)

Compiled by Emma Wendel (2009)

Last revised September 2013



University of British Columbia Archives



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Table of Contents

- **Fonds Description**
 - Titles/Dates of Creation/Physical Description
 - Biographical/Administrative Sketch
 - Scope and Content
- **Sous-fonds Description**
 - Abra Palumbo sous-fonds
- **File/Item List**
- **Catalogue entry** (UBC Library)

Fonds Description

B.C. Midwifery Collection. –1977-1985, 2004.

19 cm textual material.

22 DVDs.

2 books.

8 photographs

1 CD

In June and July of 2004, York University professor Megan Davies used funding from Associated Medical Services (Toronto) to conduct field research into the history of BC's radical homebirth and midwifery movement which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, linked to feminist, counter-culture, and back-to-the-land impulses. Potential parents allied with a small group of sympathetic health practitioners to create a sustained critique of the standard hospital birthing procedures of the 1950s and 1960s which they regarded as pathologizing and medicalizing the natural process of birth. Often drawing inspiration from aboriginal rituals and practices, these people sought to redefine birth, not as a medical event, but as a spiritual experience meant to take place within the context of home, family, and community. Coming from within these communities, certain women were deemed 'midwives,' not by a professional body, but by the nature of their practice and their personal status. These community midwives operated on the margins of medicine, practicing for the most part well beyond the confines of the sometimes antagonistic hospital boards and staff, but intersecting with medicine through formal or informal education, medical practice, and connections with sympathetic doctors and nurses. A total of 34 individuals were interviewed, including women and partners who had homebirths, community midwives, doctors and nurses. A decision was made to video-tape the interviews and filming was done by the project research assistant, UBC midwifery student Sarah Jane Swartz. Oral history interviews were conducted in the Kootenays, Vancouver, Victoria, Salt Spring Island, and Black Creek.

The fonds consists of 22 DVDs of the interviews, and other materials described in the Abra Palumbo sous-fonds.

An indexed description of subject matter in the interviews compiled by project research assistant Corrine MacPherson is included in the collection accession file.

Sous-fonds Description

Abra Palumbo sous-fonds. –1977-1985.

19 cm textual material.

2 books.

8 photographs.

1 CD.

Abra Palumbo was born in 1945 in New York City. Her father was a science teacher and a naturalist and she often assisted newborn animals as a child. After leaving the U.S. in 1967, she lived in various parts of Canada, primarily B.C., where after the homebirth of her own child in 1972 she became active in the emerging movement of midwifery. The midwifery movement came from a desire on the parts of some women who were not interested in the hospitalization or drugs systematically used at the time and wanted to naturalize the birthing process. Palumbo's involvement in the movement began at a grassroots level, without any particular training in the matter but as part of a support network of likeminded individuals. While midwifery certification was available through Washington State University, Palumbo's family responsibilities prevented her from taking the necessary courses. Instead, she began assisting in births in 1974 in the Kootenay region, while she and others began an apprentice-style system of training as community midwives, occasionally assisted by medical professionals. The midwifery movement met with a great deal of resistance from medical professionals of the time, and much of their training came from on-the-job assistance of home births. The stance of the medical profession towards homebirths began to change as the concept became more popular, however. Palumbo retired from midwifery in 1986 and moved into a career in early childhood education, after assisting in roughly a hundred deliveries during her career.

Sous-fonds consists of printed papers kept by Abra Palumbo about the midwifery movement in the 1970s and 80s in B.C. Most of the materials are official forms, manuals, or articles utilized by the midwifery movement. Other materials include 2 books, a CD, and photographs.

Information about Abra Palumbo was taken primarily from the DVD interview from the B.C. Midwifery Collection (VT 1983:14).

File List

DVDs

Each DVD contains the following information, as well as a number and the names of the interviewee:

Homebirth and Midwifery in B.C. DVDs

Interviewer Megan J. Davies

Videographer Sarah Jane Swartz

- | | |
|------------|---|
| VT 1983:1 | DVD #1 Interview with Leslie M. Campos, Lisa Farr, Irme Mende, and Lynnda Moore. July 27, 2004. Slokan, B.C. 118 minutes. |
| VT 1983:2 | DVD #2 Interview with Dr. J. Michael Hartley. June 28, 2004. Nelson, B.C. 41 minutes. |
| VT 1983:3 | DVD #3 Interview with Dian L. Holt, Susan Stryck, Liz Tanner, and Don Tanner. June 28, 2004. Nelson, B.C. 91 minutes. |
| VT 1983:4 | DVD #4 Interview with Pamela Nagley Stevenson. June 28, 2004. Winlaw, B.C. 49 minutes. |
| VT 1983:5 | DVD # 5 Interview with Irene Bell. June 29, 2004. Nelson B.C. 87 minutes. |
| VT 1983:6 | ? |
| VT 1983:7 | DVD #7 Interview with Marilyn Burgoon and Barry Burgoon. June 30, 2004. Vallican, B.C. 51 minutes. |
| VT 1983:8 | DVD #8 Interview with Heather Martin. July 7, 2004. Salt Spring Island, B.C. 98 minutes. |
| VT 1983:9 | DVD #9 Interview with Gail Mussell and Jo Twaites. July 7, 2004. Salt Spring Island, B.C. 34 minutes. |
| VT 1983:10 | DVD #10 Interview with Maggie Ramsey. July 7, 2004. Salt Spring Island, B.C. 110 minutes. |
| VT 1983:11 | DVD #11 Interview with Tema Dawn. July 8, 2004. Salt Spring Island, B.C. 60 minutes. |

- VT 1983:12 DVD #12 Interview with Rae-Anne Huth. July 8, 2004. Salt Spring Island, B.C. 57 minutes.
- VT 1983:13 DVD #13 Interview with Linda Underwood and Daphne Taylor. July 8, 2004. Salt Spring Island, B.C. 42 minutes.
- VT 1983:14 DVD #14 Interview with Abra Palumbo. July 9, 2004. Black Creek, B.C. 99 minutes.
- VT 1983:15 DVD #15 Interview with Katherine Atkins. July 10, 2004. Salt Spring Island, B.C. 41 minutes.
- VT 1983:16 DVD #16 Interview with Barbara Ray. July 10, 2004. Victoria, B.C. 114 minutes.
- VT 1983:17 DVD #17 Interview with Anne Barkham. July 13, 2004. Langley, B.C. 45 minutes.
- VT 1983:18 DVD #18 Interview with Camille Bush. July 13, 2004. Vancouver, B.C. 115 minutes.
- VT 1983:19 DVD #19 Interview with Deborah Harding. July 14, 2004. White Rock, B.C. 98 minutes.
- VT 1983:20 ?
- VT 1983:21 DVD #21 Interview with Marilyn Green and Teresa O. MacDonald. July 15, 2004. Vancouver, B.C. 60 minutes.
- VT 1983:22 DVD #22 Interview with Dr. Michael Klein. July 15, 2004. Vancouver, B.C. 50 minutes.

ABRA PALUMBO SOUS-FONDS

BOX 1

1-1 Schools & Study

- 1-2 Manual Originals-K.C.C.C. Manual Originals "Responsible Home-Centered Childbirth"
- 1-3 Midwives' Associations: MANA, AOM, ACHI, MABC, MTF, NMA, NAPSAC
- 1-4 Midwives Forms-P/N, Birth, Newborn, Postpartum, Transfer, etc.
- 1-5 Parent Information
- 1-6 Ina May Workshop-Ina May Gaskin Workshop, Cortes Island-1984 (7 photographs)
- 1-7 Informed Choice and Agreement Forms
- 1-8 "A Childbirth Manual" (bound)
- 1-9 Statistics
- 1-10 Articles/Media & Presentations
- 1-11 Pre-Natal Classes

BOX 2

Chamberlain, Geoffrey. *The Safety of the Unborn Child*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1969

Levy, Juliette de Bairacli. *Nature's Children: A Guide to Organic Foods and Herbal Remedies for Children*. New York: Shocken Books, 1971.

- 2-1 KCCC (Kootenay Childbirth Counseling Center) & Kootenay Parents-Corresp.
(File includes Audio CD: "Presentation for Maternity Nurses at Kootenay Lake District Hospital (KLDH) Nelson B.C. May 1983. May 1983. Ilene Bell, Abra Palumbo (& baby Anna) Representing the Kootenay Childbirth Counseling Center & MABC. Jo Doetzel-Head Nurse-Mat. and Mat. Nurses.")

PHOTOGRAPHS

- 143.1/1 Barb Ray & Camille Bush-Early 1990's. Working on the midwifery legislation draft. [sp]
- 143.1/2 Early 1990s. L-Rt: Barb Ray. Camille Bush, Deborah Kozlick, Sadie Minard, Abra Palumbo. [sp]
- 143.1/3 Midwives Workshop-Hollyhock Farm. Cortez Island, B.C. 1984. [sp]
- 143.1/4 Ina May Gaskin-Cortes Island-1984, Hollyhock Farm. [sp]
- 143.1/5 Ina May (back turned) & 3 midwives at Cortez Island workshop 1984. [sp]
- 143.1/6 Ina May Gaskin-1984 midwives workshop-Cortez Island. (Woman on rt is Mara.) [sp]
- 143.1/7 Ina May Gaskin (Hollyhock Farm) Cortez Island, B.C. 1984. [sp]
- 143.1/8 Abra Palumbo-1984-on Cortez Island at Ina May workshop. [sp]
- 143.1/9 Taking a break and soaking up sun! Abra & Susan-1984-Cortez. [sp]