Ruth Mendenhall papers, 1937-2004

Finding aid prepared by Dvorah Lewis with assistance from Julie Graham, May 2015; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.
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Title: Ruth Mendenhall papers
Collection number: 1823
Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 linear ft. (2 boxes and 1 flat box)
Date: 1937-2004
Abstract: Ruth Mendenhall was a mountaineer who was involved in a number of first ascents and succeeded in climbing all of California's 14,000-foot peaks. The bulk of the collection consists of carbon copy letters written by Mendenhall detailing her mountain climbing explorations. Also included are typescript writings and published articles by and about Mendenhall, a scrapbook documenting the Mendenhall family mountain climbing trips, a small number of writings by and about Mendenhall's husband, John Mendenhall, and small amount of ephemera related to mountaineering.
Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.
creator: Mendenhall, Ruth
Restrictions on Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Ruth Mendenhall Papers (Collection 1832). Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
Provenance/Source of Acquisition
Gift of Valerie Mendenhall Cohen; 2008.
Processing Information
Processed by Dvorah Lewis with assistance from Julie Graham; May 2015.
UCLA Catalog Record ID
UCLA Catalog Record ID: 7686889
Biography/History
Ruth Dyar Mendenhall was born on August 16, 1912 in Kiesling, Washington and graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Washington with a major in Journalism. She relocated to California and in 1937, she joined the Sierra Club; she first encountered rock climbing in the spring of 1938. She climbed all six routes of the Tahquitz Rock. She married fellow climber, John Dale Mendenhall in 1939. She succeeded in climbing all of the 14,000-foot peaks in California and as a pioneer mountaineer, she was involved in a number of first ascents in California including the Swiss Arête on Mount Sill (1938), Mount Whitney Third Needle (1939), Temple Crag North Peak (1940) and Mount Whitney's southeast buttress (1941), among others. Together with John Mendenhall, she completed the first ascent of Mount Confederation in the Canadian Rockies (1947).
She was an active contributor to Mugelnoos, a newsletter of the Sierra Club's Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections and served on the editorial board in 1940 and 1941 and remained on the editorial committee until 1978. She also served as the editor of American Alpine News from 1978-1981. Her book publications include Backpack Cookery (1966), Backpack Techniques (1967), and in 1969, she co-authored with John Mendenhall, Introduction to Rock and Mountain Climbing, later published in 1983 as The Challenge of Rock and Mountain Climbing. She also co-authored a collection of outdoor recipes in the book Gorp, Glop and Glue Stew (1982).
Mendenhall joined The American Alpine Club in 1966 and was elected to the Board of Directors (1974 and 1977); she also served on the Membership Committee and was its chairman from 1977-1980. The Mendenhalls were awarded the Farquhar Award from the Sierra Club for achievement and leadership in mountaineering. They also were awarded the Angelo Heilprin Citation from The American Alpine Club for service to the Club and mountaineering. The couple relocated to Seattle in 1978. She was an active member of Women Climbers of the Northwest and The American Alpine Club's Publications Committee. Ruth Mendenhall died on March 22, 1989. In 2007, Valerie Mendenhall Cohen published the book, Woman on the Rocks: The Mountaineering Letters of Ruth Dyar Mendenhall, which documented Ruth Mendenhall as a pioneer.
mountaineer.

Scope and Content
The collection consists of materials related to mountaineer and writer Ruth Dyar Mendenhall. The bulk of the collection are letters written by Mendenhall to her parents and other family members detailing her mountain climbing explorations. Also included are typescript writings and published articles by and about Mendenhall. Additionally, there is a scrapbook documenting the Mendenhall family mountain climbing trips, a small number of writings by and about Mendenhall’s husband, John Mendenhall, and small amount of ephemera related to mountaineering. The materials in the collection may have been the source documentation for Valerie Mendenhall Cohen’s book, Woman on the Rocks: The Mountaineering Letters of Ruth Dyar Mendenhall.

Organization and Arrangement
Arranged in the following series:
1. Letters
2. Writings by Ruth Mendenhall and John Mendenhall
3. Writings about Ruth Mendenhall and John Mendenhall
4. Photographs and ephemera.

Related Material
Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Records (Collection 1199). Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Mendenhall, Ruth -- Archives
Letters.
Mountaineering--Archives.


Scope and Content
The series consists of carbon copies of letters written by Mendenhall to her parents and other family members detailing her mountain climbing explorations. There are occasional annotations, copied transcripts, Post-it® notes and/or photocopies of letters produced by Valerie Mendenhall Cohen; the majority of Post-it® notes were removed. The letters may have been used by Valerie Cohen for her book Woman on the Rocks: The Mountaineering Letters of Ruth Dyar Mendenhall. The files are arranged in loose chronological order.

Box 2, Folder 1
Letters about first season. 1937-1939.

Box 2, Folders 2-3
Letters about Base Camp. 1939-1942.

Box 2, Folders 4-6
Letters about Base Camp-summer. 1939-1942.

Box 2, Folders 7-8
Letters about war years. 1941-1945.

Box 2, Folder 9
Letters about Expedition years. 1946-1957.

Box 2,

Folders 10-11

Box 2, Folder 12

Scope and Content
May have been used for Valerie Cohen's book, Woman on the Rocks: The Mountaineering Letters of Ruth Dyar Mendenhall. Some items annotated.
| Box 2, Folder 13 | Writings by Ruth Mendenhall and John Mendenhall. 1940s-1980s. |
|                 | Scope and Content |
|                 | With typed manuscript drafts for The Saga of Snow Creek written for Desert Magazine, First Ascents in the Canadian Rockies, and Woman on the rocks, The Early Years of the SMS and RCS (republished by the Sierra Club for the Internet) written by Ruth Mendenhall and a small number of items authored by Mendenhall’s husband, John Mendenhall. |

| Box 3, Folder 1 | First Ascent of Mount Confederation. 1947-1948. |
|                | Scope and Content |
|                | Article, notes, photographs and clippings. |

| Box 3, Folder 2 | Writings about Ruth Mendenhall. 1950s-1980s. |
|                | Scope and Content |
|                | Many pieces written by Vivian Mendenhall after Ruth Mendenhall's death in 1989. Small number of items about or mentions of John Mendenhall. |

|                | Photographs and ephemera. 1930s-2004. |
|                | Scope and Content |
|                | The series includes a scrapbook documenting the Mendenhall family mountain climbing trips, a small number of photographs of mountains, some of which are identified, clippings about mountaineering, and a Sierra Club Angeles Chapter informational booklet. There is no specific arrangement to the series. |

| Box 1, Folder 2 | Ruth Mendenhall scrapbook (about mountaineering). ca. late-1930s-ca. 1940s. |
| Box 3, Folder 4 | Mountain photographs. undated. |
| Box 3, Folder 3 | Clippings regarding mountaineering. 1959, 1963. |
|                | Scope and Content |

| Box 3, Folder 6 | Sierra Club Angeles Chapter informational booklet. 1959 Oct-Jan 1960. |