

Muriel Miller Dressler, Poet, Papers Collected by William Plumley, 1969-1992, undated A&M 3322

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Title Statement

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Descriptive Summary

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Unit Date

1969-1992, undated

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1970-1977, undated

Language

English

Abstract

Papers of Muriel Miller Dressler (1918-2000), of Witcher, Kanawha County, West Virginia, noted Appalachian poet and lecturer in the 1970s and 1980s. Collection is chiefly composed of Dressler's poetry and other materials related to her career in the 1970s and early 1980s, though much of the material is undated. Writings include drafts of the poems in her two published collections, *Appalachia, My Land* (1973) and *Appalachia* (1977), as well as drafts of unpublished work, materials related to her speaking engagements, and letters related to her poetry. Notable correspondents from the 1970s include Earl Hamner, Ken Kesey, Martin Sheen, and Jesse Stuart. Collection also includes photographs, slides, and film footage of Dressler and audio cassettes of Dressler and William Plumley discussing Appalachian literature. Papers were compiled and probably organized by William Plumley, poet, professor of English, and editor of anthologies and articles on Appalachian folklore, poetry and fiction. Materials largely retain the order in which they were received from Plumley.

Creator

Dressler, Muriel Miller, 1918-2000

Extent

2.1 Linear Feet 2 ft. 1 in. (5 document cases, 5 in. each)

Physical Location

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Biographical / Historical

Muriel Miller Dressler was born on July 4, 1918, the youngest of seven daughters, in Witcher, Kanawha County, West Virginia. Dressler began writing poems as a child, after hearing her mother recite poetry while working in the family's fields. Her first published poem, 'Appalachia,' appeared in 1969 and she later published two collections of poetry, *Appalachia, My Land* in 1973 and *Appalachia* in 1977, both by Morris Harvey College Publications. Her poems are also included in many edited anthologies of Appalachian poetry. Dressler was awarded an honorary degree from Morris Harvey College in Charleston, West Virginia, (now the University of Charleston) and the Appalachian Gold Medallion, and was also one of three Resident Poets of the West Virginia Department of Education. Dressler wrote passionately about Appalachian identity and mountain culture, and she lectured and performed dramatic readings of her poems at numerous events throughout the Appalachian Region.

Muriel Dressler married Lester Dressler, who worked primarily for CSX Railroad. The couple lived in St. Albans, West Virginia. Lester Dressler passed away in January 1999; Muriel followed her husband in February 2000.

Scope and Contents

Papers of Muriel Miller Dressler (1918-2000), of Witcher, Kanawha County, West Virginia, noted Appalachian

poet and lecturer in the 1970s and 1980s. Collection is chiefly composed of Dressler's poetry and other materials related to her career in the 1970s and early 1980s, though much of the material is undated.

Series 1, Published Poems, primarily contains typescript and several handwritten drafts of poems that appear in Dressler's published collections, *Appalachia, My Land* (1973) and *Appalachia* (1977).

Series 2, Unpublished Poems, consists of typescript and handwritten drafts of Dressler's unpublished poems.

Series 3, Untitled Poems, contains typescript and handwritten drafts of unpublished and untitled works.

Series 4, Related Materials, is primarily composed of manuscript materials related to Dressler's career as a poet and her numerous speaking engagements. Materials include correspondence with Earl Hamner from 1975 to 1986 about Dressler's poetry and using one of her poems in the TV show *Morningstar/Eveningstar* in 1986; drafts and notes for stage and film productions; signed broadside of several of Dressler's poems; newspaper clippings about Dressler's poetry and readings; and programs, letters, and financial papers related to Dressler's speaking engagements and appearances at the Appalachian Festival at Morris Harvey College in the 1970s and early 1980s. This series also includes letters from Martin Sheen, Ken Kesey, Jesse Stuart, and William Plumley from the 1970s, as well as several letters and greeting cards from friends, and biographical newspaper clippings, also from the 1970s.

Series 5, Audio-Visual Materials, includes photographs and slides of Dressler during readings and at various festivals (some from 1977, but mostly undated); unedited film footage of Dressler; three audio-cassettes of Muriel Dressler and William Plumley discussing Appalachian literature in 1976; and a video of Will Geer reading Dressler's poetry in 1975. Also includes many undated and unidentified photographs.

Papers were compiled and probably organized by William Crawford Plumley, poet, professor of English, and editor of anthologies and articles on Appalachian folklore, poetry and fiction. Materials largely retain the order in which they were received from Plumley.

Keywords

Authors -- Letters and papers

Dressler, Mildred Muriel