RUTH STONE’S VAST LIBRARY of the FEMALE MIND
Producer/Director Nora Jacobson, feature documentary, color, English, 76 minutes, www.offthegridproductions.com
trailer: https://vimeo.com/609215065

After tragedy strikes, acclaimed poet Ruth Stone retreated to the margins of the literary world, working tirelessly to provide for her children, and transforming her grief into poetry, using simple, startling language.

Storyline: Ruth Stone was a promising young poet, living an idyllic life with her beloved husband, a poet and professor. When he died unexpectedly by suicide, Ruth was flung out into the world, destitute with three daughters to support.

Though not well known outside of the poetry world, Ruth won accolades and awards, such as the National Book Award for Poetry, the Wallace Stevens Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Delmore Schwartz Award, and she was a finalist for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, among many others.

Beloved by many, Ruth’s house in Goshen, Vermont became a mecca for students, poets, friends and family members. There she inspired people to make art and write, not only through activities such as the “poetry game”, but by providing solace and nurture, surrounded by nature and camaraderie.

After Ruth died, her granddaughter Bianca Stone and husband Ben Pease, began renovating Ruth’s house and turning it into a writer’s retreat. Their goal is to create an enduring legacy that will keep Ruth’s name alive and nurture a new generation of poets.

Style of the Film: Using an intimate approach, the film, 12 years in the making, combines verité footage of Ruth at different times of her life, reciting poetry and talking about how she writes, intertwined with lively and heartfelt observations of people who knew her. These include award-winning poets Sharon Olds, Toi Derricotte, Major Jackson, Chard DeNiord, and Edward Hirsch, as well as those who knew her best—her daughters and grandchildren.

The film is enhanced with animation by granddaughter Bianca Stone, an accomplished poet and artist, and rare archival 16mm footage of Ruth entertaining students and reciting poetry. Ruth’s home in Goshen, Vermont is also a star of the film. We see its transformation from a ramshackle and decrepit farmhouse to an inviting and vibrant poetry center.

Sharon Olds: “Ruth Stone’s poems are mysterious, hilarious, powerful...They are understandable, but not simple...She has a tragic deadpan humor: love and destruction are right next to each other.”

Galway Kinnell: “Her poems startle us with their shapeliness, their humor, their youthfulness, their wild aptness, their strangeness, their sudden familiarity, the moral gulps they prompt, their fierce exactness of language and memory.”

Nora Jacobson is an award-winning filmmaker of documentaries and narrative films. Her films include The Hanji Box, the 6-part collaborative film Freedom & Unity: The Vermont Movie; My Mother’s Early Lovers, Nothing Like Dreaming, and Delivered Vacant. Her films have screened at many festivals including Sundance, the New York Film Festival and shown on PBS.

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