



About the poem, “The Fabled Asp”
Written and narrated by Judith Masur

In 2008 Fabled Asp founder Dr. Laura Rifkin asked the disabled lesbian poet, Barbara Ruth to write a poem explaining why we chose Fabled Asp as our name. Asp is the Old English word for aspen.

In her poem, Barbara Ruth speaks in the voice of the aspen grove, evoking the nature of these ancient and resourceful trees, so persistent, so beautiful and sacred to so many cultures, their short lives essential to the forest’s growth. In the poem she expresses the qualities that make the aspen such a perfect metaphor for the community and the consciousness of disabled lesbians and for the organization documenting our lives.

Take a moment now to read “The Fabled Asp” by Barbara Ruth. It’s the opening to the exhibition; it’s the heart of the meaning of the project; it’s the message we want people to understand about who we are.

To get you started, here is just a taste of the poem:

“The Fabled Asp” by Barbara Ruth

Aspens don't live long in tree-time,
forty to one hundred fifty years,
but that's only the outward story
you cannot date us by our rings; that is not our nature.

Beneath the ground, each grove a soul,
Growing in the clonal manner, all roots united.
Within the grove we do not birth or die, except as metaphor.
We send up stems, each with its stories, hand-talking,
its quake: we are a quaking people.



And later in the poem she writes:

“Look for us near rivers, streams.
Hear us calling in the wind.
Because our heart pulses deep in earth,
after raging fire, when you think the forest was destroyed, hold on.
Our stems are coming through the ashes,
once again to be the place multitudes call home.”