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RITA MAE BROWN: no apologies

by Pat Scott

Rita Mae Brown was in Portland for a few hours last spring to promote her latest book, *High Hearts*, a story of love and courage set during the Civil War.

Brown is still best known perhaps for *Rubyfruit Jungle*, a cult classic compared by many to Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. *Rubyfruit* deals with the audacious coming of age of a young lesbian. The novel broke the shrouded-sexuality and rampant breast-beating tradition of *Well of Loneliness* (where a lesbian relationship could be portrayed as long as it ended dolefully and the principals were suitably punished for their "sins"). *Rubyfruit Jungle* was at least semi-autobiographical, humorous and completely unapologetic; and it eventually won the hearts of its readers. Its author, however, is less overwhelmingly loved.