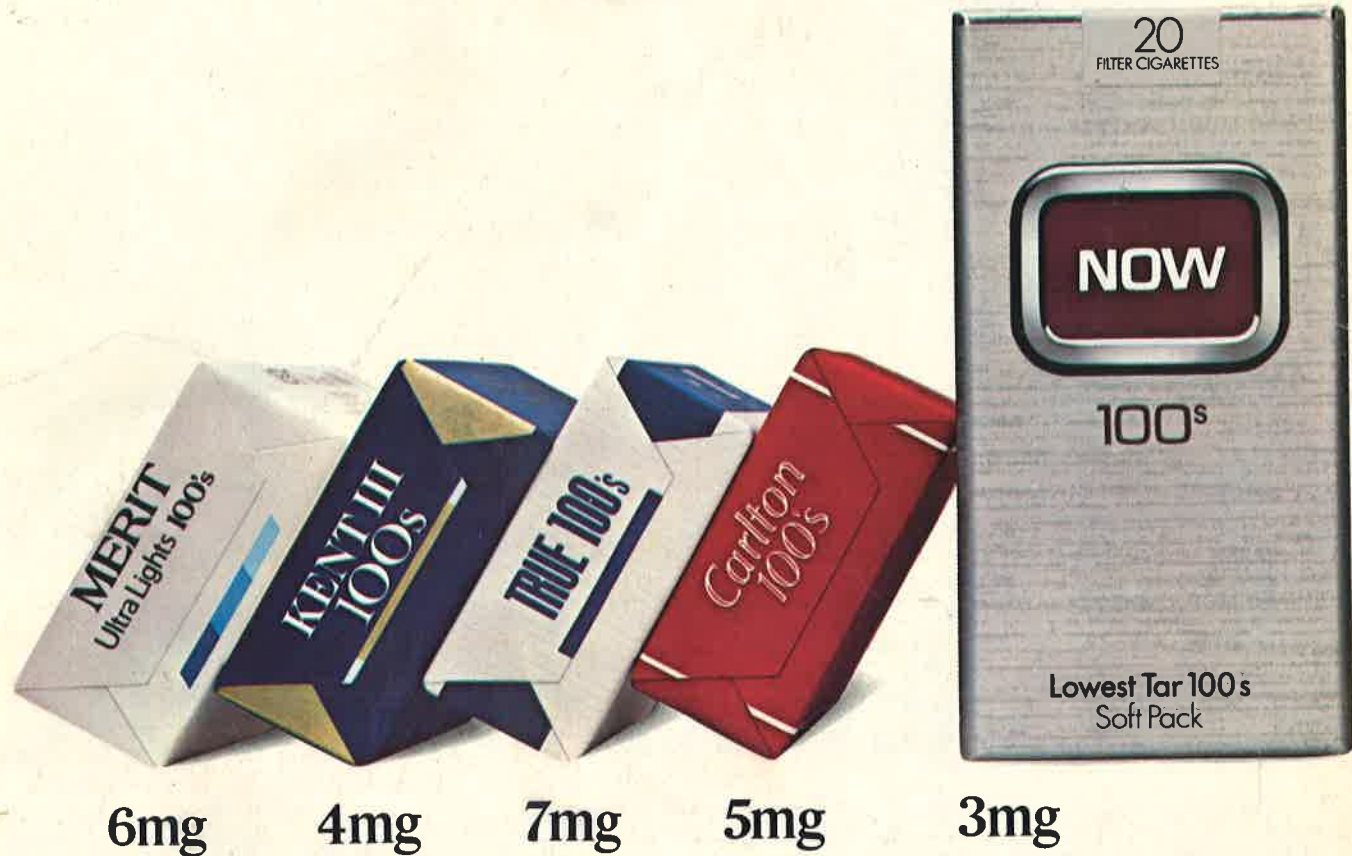


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- ▶ **Feel-Good Foods**
- ▶ *Fit at Any Size*
- ▶ **Getting Well at Home**
- ▶ *Combating Color Anxiety*
- ▶ **Mothering New Mothers**
- ▶ *Will Medicare Be There for You?*
- ▶ **At Last—One-Stop Health Care**
- ▶ *Secrets of Multiorgasmic Women*



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REVLON

SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

## Not Your Typical Folksinger



Singer/songwriter Phranc

BY MICHELE KORT

The first thing you notice about the woman named Phranc (pronounced "frank") is, undeniably, her sharp-edged flattop haircut. Should we expect an avant-garde chanteuse, a la Grace Jones? Or a "stone butch," as a *Village Voice* writer labeled her? But talk to the soft-spoken 28-year-old singer, who lives in Santa Monica, California, with a parakeet as companion, or better yet, listen to her debut album, "Folksinger" (Rhino Records).

On the 12 compositions of "Folksinger," Phranc reduces her instrumentation to folky basics: voice, guitar, harmonica, and the percussion of bongos and handclaps. Add to that her distinctive lyrics: Phranc creates modern protest songs—the kind of angry, or funny, message-laden music sung by Pete Seeger and Allan Sherman, two of Phranc's early influences.

The 1960s' folksingers might not have sung odes to female athletes ("Amazons": "I wanted to play for the Dallas Diamonds/And live with Martina like Nancy Lieberman..."), but like Phranc, they would have protested injustice wherever they found it. Phranc targets kitschy or mundane insults ("Female Mudwrestling," for one example; or for another,

nondisabled people parking in spaces reserved for the disabled, the focus of "Handicapped") just as easily as the more poignant story of a murdered neighbor ("Mary Hooley") or of Central America ("El Salvador," which has been released on a 12-inch single in England by Stiff Records). It's all folk to her.

"I like music where you can hear the words and it tells a story," says Phranc, who is the granddaughter of a cantor. "That's why I went back to

playing acoustic music—so you can hear it."

Phranc adopted her moniker in high school when she cut her hair and came out. When other lesbian feminists were buying Meg Christian records in the 1970s, she was performing in Los Angeles in radical punk bands like Castration Squad, Catholic Discipline, and Nervous Gender.

When Phranc decided to unplug her electric guitar, though, she didn't abandon her punk audiences. Instead, she started bringing folk music to them, organizing acoustic nights headlined by top L.A. punk artists like John Doe and Exene Cervenka of X,

to Larriva of the Cruzados, and the Circle Jerks. Imagine the revelation of hearing the "most hard-core punk band in Los Angeles," as Phranc describes the Circle Jerks, singing "Put a Little Love in Your Heart."

While Phranc is serious in her protests, they are usually delivered in a cheery voice and in a humorous context. "Some people don't want to hear [about my sexual identity and my politics], and that's fine," she says. "I'll still be out there trying to charm the shit out of them."

*Michele Kort is a free-lance writer who follows the Los Angeles music scene.*

NEW YORK CITY

## Jean Zaleski: Art for Women's Sake

BY TRACY COCHRAN

After two decades of activism, artist Jean Zaleski is finally receiving her due. The New York City chapter of NOW recently honored Zaleski with its Susan B. Anthony Award, and the artist just enjoyed her first SoHo opening, where her luminous "Treespaces" turned the Elaine Starkman Gallery into a veritable bower.

"I like to think that the most important work that I've done for the Women's Movement and for women artists is to have persevered in my time as an artist," said Zaleski.

"When I first came to New York in the late 1950s, galleries didn't even want to look at my work," she continued. "There was one dealer who made things very clear: he said that I was a very good artist, but he would not be able to sell my work like a man's work... since most galleries wouldn't invest in a woman painter because the chances were that she would drop out.

"You know, he was right. Most of the women I started with dropped out. It was just too difficult."

But instead of throwing up her hands, Zaleski moved to Philadelphia, lived in Europe, and in the mid-1970s returned to New York and became involved with Women in the Arts Foundation, a New York-based advocacy organization for women artists. Before long, she rose to the group's top position and, in 1975, became one of the leaders instrumental in



One of Zaleski's "Treespaces"

bringing the first major exhibition of the work of women artists to the Brooklyn Museum.

By "pecking and pecking" at the curators of the Whitney Museum, Women in the Arts, under Zaleski's leadership, helped increase the numbers of women represented in the institution's annual show of up-and-coming artists from a mere 8 percent in 1971 to more than 40 percent in 1976.

Women in the Arts also set the precedent for the kinds of artistic protests now staged by other groups such as the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA). (See "Artistic Liberty," in "News from All Over," February, 1986.) But despite the gains Women in the Arts made in the last decade, Zaleski is concerned with what she sees as the current backlash against women artists.

While she's quick to point out the current problems faced by her colleagues, Zaleski still believes that for women, the art scene of the 1980s is a great improvement over the one she faced in the 1950s.

Zaleski is now focusing more on her own work and is absorbed in her studies of trees. After all, says the painter, women artists doing the finest work they can "is really the best political statement we can make for women."

*Jean Zaleski's work can be seen at the Elaine Starkman Gallery in New York City, the Stanley & Schenck Gallery in Atlanta, Georgia, and at the Nuance Gallery in Tampa, Florida.*

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# GOING FOR THE BIG "O"

In their new book, this couple report discoveries about easily orgasmic women  **By Sarah Crichton**



JUDITH AND MARC MESHERER

**L**ET'S CUT STRAIGHT TO THE juicy part: there are at least two women in *Ultimate Pleasure: The Secrets of Easily Orgasmic Women*, by Marc and Judith Meshorer (due out in July from St. Martin's Press, \$15.95), who have come about a hundred times during a single sexual encounter.

"And you don't believe that," teases Judith Meshorer, tucked into a couch in her Shaker Heights, Ohio, home.

"Look," says Marc Meshorer. "I really don't want to get into numbers. Numbers are not the point of this book. Numbers are meaningless. One beautiful orgasm is as good as dozens. More isn't necessarily better."

"To some people," says Judith Meshorer.

"Okay," he says. "To some. Right. It's an individual thing. This is a subjective impression. I mean...at any rate...if you look at a woman...talk to her...if you..." He quits sputtering. "Look," he says, "the bottom line here is pleasure. Life is brief. There's tragedy and tears; there's nothing wrong with a few moments of pleasure. A woman doesn't have to be orgasmic if she doesn't want to be. But this is one of the ultimate pleasures of life. It's nice for her to have a choice."

To be sure. But can a nonorgasmic woman learn to be orgasmic by reading a book? And can a book teach a consistently orgasmic woman to be multi- or "ultra"-orgasmic like the women above? Maybe not. But maybe it can help. Maybe hearing the testimony of "sexually robust, healthy women," hearing what goes on with them, how they do it, can offer "a boost to other women in some way." That's what the Meshorers hope. And that's why they launched, four years ago, an investigation into the sexual techniques of easily orgasmic women.

"Marc came to me and said, 'I want your advice—not as a wife, but as a woman,'" recalls Judith. "He said: 'If I were to research just one area of sexuality, what area would it be?' So I went off and thought about it, and I came back and said, 'Well, darling, it seems to me there's a bottom line here, and it's 'How To Get an Orgasm.' There are a lot of women out there who do not [reach] orgasm. Maybe there are women out there who do this easily, and we should find out how they do it, and maybe they can be a help to other women who aren't easily orgasmic.'"

And Marc said, "Eureka!"

The Meshorers are hardly your typical sexologists. In contrast to our vision

of Masters and Johnson, dour and drab in their white lab coats, Judith Meshorer has long raspberry nails, frosted puffs of hair, and is wearing pink-and-blue paisley socks to match her purple suede high heels. She is a lawyer, who works in family law, and most recently, child-find cases. Her husband, Marc, makes an equally unusual scientist. First there was a law degree—that was in 1962—which was followed by four years toward a doctorate in psychology. He studied love and sexuality under Abraham Maslow at Brandeis, but Maslow began to spend less time in the department, and Meshorer returned home to Cleveland. He retained his membership in the Society for the Scientific Study of Sex, but his energies went into business, manufacturing construction equipment. The business boomed; he sold it, invested, consulted, and comfortably retired in his forties. He tried his hand at fiction without much success, and then turned to his wife for advice.

Which brings us back to the question: can a woman actually learn to have an orgasm (or two or three or dozens) from a book? The Meshorers point to one of the 60 women whom they extensively interviewed for their study: "She was nonorgasmic, or at least only

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sorry for the poor browns. When I get to heaven I mean to spend a considerable portion of my first million years in painting, and so get to the bottom of the subject. But then I shall require a still gayer palette than I get here below. I expect orange and vermilion will be the darkest, dullest colors upon it, and beyond them there will be a whole range of new colors which will delight the celestial eye." **Ms.**

*Susan Jacoby's most recent book is "Wild Justice: The Evolution of Revenge" (Harper & Row).*

## Relaxation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 71

"Right. Hmmmm. You wouldn't want to try something avant-garde, would you? Like polarity and vitamin D work?"

"What is it?"

"You're massaged with maple walnut ice cream while a Good Humor man lays hands on your vertebrae. It's very soothing. And you can recall the feeling later if you carry around a little Good Humor bell. It's only eighty-five dollars. It's not Häagen-Dazs, but it's relaxing...."

I shook my head no.

"All right. Now I have it. You know what you need: a relaxation tape. That's what!"

"Really?"

"Definitely." She ran home, brought back a videotape and placed it in my VCR.

"You'll love this. It's called 'The Fish Tank.' It's very, very...Renoir. Watch this for sixty minutes, and you'll be calm as a sea cucumber." She looked at me. "Are you ready?"

"Watch a fish tank for an hour?" I looked at the box. "Thirty-nine dollars and ninety-five cents for a film of fish? I could have bought a real fish tank for that!" At this point, I was more distraught than ever.

Janie smiled knowingly. "But in a real fish tank, Sue, the fish die. These fish are guaranteed for the life of the tape. Now just lie down and relax."

I had no choice. I was stressed out.

So we lay on the floor in front of the TV, and a blank screen came into view.

At first we heard only:

"Blablabla"

"Blab-blal-bla-bla"

Bubbles. It was the baritone sound of bubbles.

Then two black mollies swam across a meager little fish tank, gliding silently past aquatic plants, in and out of

plastic grottoes. Slowly, they drifted. Quietly—except for "blab-blal-bla-bla." We watched for a while. And watched.

After only 36 minutes, my head was nodding, and my arms hung limp at my sides. A little spittle was coming from my mouth.

Sure I had an article due, my rent due, my house to clean before my in-laws came. But so what? Life is short.

It was working. I was starting to relax.

"See," said my friend. "You are now in a state of deep relaxation."

I nodded. "Either that or I've turned into a guppy." I laughed at my joke.

Jane didn't. She looked at me solemnly.

"You *are* turning into a guppy, Sue. That's the secret of the relaxation business. We call it 'guppy euphoria.'"

"I don't get it."

Jane looked at me. "It's simple. Look around. The bomb could go off any day. There's a one-in-three chance that your business will go under, a one-in-two chance that your marriage will fail, one-in-four odds that your child will take up drugs, and one-in-two-and-a-half that you'll be seriously ill within the year. Now how else can you relax unless you're a guppy?"

# smoke

*please try Carlton.*

"I see."

"Besides, admit it, you feel better—right?"

"Yeah. Actually, I do."

"Sure you do. And you're going to feel better all day too. Know why?"

I shook my head.

"Because they just finished construction in my apartment. Boy, that noise was driving me nuts."

"That's *your* apartment!" I screamed.

"Sure," said Jane. "Well, gotta go! I don't want to be late for yoga, or somebody will steal my new mantra. Bye."

Maybe instead of killing Jane, I should consider making a creamy, anti-stress banana malt—and dumping it over her head. **Ms.**

*Susan Perkis Haven is a humor writer for magazines and television.*

## Feel-Good Foods

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 72

served on Wonder bread; mayonnaise slathered on inappropriate accompaniments (atop peanut butter on Triscuits, for example).

• *Genteel pursuits.* A pot of hot tea, cin-

namon toast or toast points.

If we are to serve and nurture ourselves, we sip our steaming tea not from a clumsy, thick-walled mug but from a more comely vessel, perhaps a favorite Spode cup or the smaller type of mug with bunnies and hedgehogs romping on it, obviously made for smaller hands. Not for us any old dinner plate, but that special one from the cupboard whose mystical properties allow it to display only the most savory and select morsels.

And there are the bowls. Spooned foods require them, of course, but bowls serve deeper, less forthright needs. We can wrap our hands around a bowl, edge it toward our body, cup its smooth, rounded goodness. Bowls never hoard, they yield. And because there is nothing parsimonious about a bowl of *anything*,

we are allowed to be shamelessly proprietary about what is in them. With a bowl on our lap we are given a reprieve from the endless giving our lives require of us; instead there is the purifying selfishness of peering into the private depths of that tomato bisque or stodgy oatmeal and thinking: Mine, all mine.

The very ways in which we serve ourselves are not without their rituals. When I *need* my grits, my course of action is as unvarying as it is fulfilling. A stick of unsalted butter is set out to

soften. Now, I *could* make "grits for one," but I don't. I make, according to the package directions, grits for... four. The steep-sided putty-colored English pudding bowl, which has repeatedly proved that is precisely the right size for "grits—four portions," is strategically placed near the stove where I dot its interior with blobs of butter while the water boils. The grits have thickened in the saucepan. I spill half their glorious glutenous mass into the bowl. More little dots of butter, and the rest of the grits poured on top. Still more butter, and a smidge of pepper. As this excess of butter forms yellow puddles everywhere, I take my grandmother's engraved silver teaspoon in hand. And I head for my bed.

For grits are merely a Southern side dish when eaten at the table; but perched on my bed, hugging that hot pudding bowl, I am five years old in Kermit, Texas, my measles spots are fading, and my grandmother has set the tray down on the coverlet. But really, I am 40 years old in Greenwich Village and I have had an absolutely lousy day. **Ms.**

*Joni Miller is a free-lance writer who often invites her friends in for afternoon tea. She is coauthor, with Lowry S. Thompson, of "The Rubber Stamp Album" (Workman).*