

There is a Port Richmond woman who has been incapacitated by special noises. She would like to confer with me. Her lawyer may want to, may want to take a deposition. She is FEB 12 1971 without means. I have written her today, sending a copy of this vonH column, for her to inquire if this work of the foundation, which also deals with ecology, would want and could pay the costs of getting me out there, with records, pictures, etc., what is not in the available literature on noise and its consequences. I've asked her to make the inquiries and let me know. I also find myself wondering if The Whole Earth is encompassing enough to help with my work. We sure could use some! If it is not too much trouble, could you find out how one applies for this kind of grant? The larger foundations are politically turned off or won't consider a grant as small as would be involved, processing costs making it economically unfeasible. Sounds like a great foundation! If I have not asked you earlier, I have an extra copy of the Village Voice Garrison interview. HW 2/12/73

75

Poster

Mixing Curry And People

*A Commentary
By Nicholas von Hoffman*

BERKELEY, Calif.—The other afternoon Stephanie Mills was in her kitchen chopping onions, mixing her own kind of curry powder, squeezing limes over a bowl of chicken to make a marinade and talking of Julie de Lespinasse, a French woman who died 197 years ago. Stephanie had researched Julie's existence to see if she could find anyone else in history with a parallel occupation.

This long-dead hostess of the Enlightenment was, like Stef today, subsidized to run a salon. You won't see Diderot and the other philosophes in Stef's battered and studential looking apartment on the second floor of one of those Berkeley frame houses. Nor is the conversation stylized-epigrammatic, and it's not to be believed that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse said things like, "My theory is if we break bread together we're obliged not to kill each other."

The French woman must have had a brigade of servants. Stef does all the cooking, table setting and dish-washing alone. She says, "I tried it for a while with a helper but with my incubulist's mind I have all these quirky ways that don't fit in with someone else."

De Lespinasse had a patron to back her; Stef has a foundation. It is willing "to invest in serendipity" per-

haps because the Point Foundation got its money itself from the proceeds of an unorthodox enterprise that nobody could have guessed would make upward of a couple of million dollars in profits. That enterprise was the Whole Earth Catalog.

Point isn't like the Ford or Carnegie Foundations with staff people leading milk upholstered lives judiciously wasting money on weighty, multipaged inconsequentialities. You don't have to be a heavily credited member of an overly respected institution to get money from Point. They've even been known to give people a grant to spend a year doing nothing—but don't bother to apply for that. They seek out those recipients themselves and just drop the money on them.

Even the Point Foundation must placate the Internal Revenue Service so Stef is required to hand in reports on what she's doing (as Julie de Lespinasse most certainly wasn't in her unbureaucratic times). Stef's reports give you the impression of the wide variety of people she has to her twice weekly dinners: ecologists, litterateurs, politicians, Zen abbots, moviemakers and free-floating free thinkers who refuse ordinary categorization.

Stef isn't one for filling out forms so her reports may not convey the full flavor of her dinners. For instance there was the evening that The Whale Lady, the head of Project Jonas, a cetacean preservation society, took a shine to the sheriff of San Francisco's badge. It's a unique badge with the peace symbol in the middle of it and The Whale Lady was almost out the door with it before the sheriff got tough and made her give it back.

But more often Stef simply aims at introducing people who might otherwise not ever meet, and hopes for the best. But that is antithetical to the spirit of cost benefit analysis, black ink on the bottom line and let's see the results. It doesn't bother Stef who at 24 has learned to wait and look askance at too many results. Four years ago she caused a minor national furor when she gave her college valedictory speech and said she'd never give birth to a child who would have to live on *this* planet. Since then she's worked in ecology and population control and has come to the idea of the salon not only because she knows things work slowly but she doubts her competency to give lectures and lead movements.

Having been an editor, speechmaker and activist, Stef has found a way of blending the very oldest and the very newest notions of a woman's role, and if she can't know what will come of it she does know they helped hatch the French Revolution in Julie de Lespinasse's living room.