

## In search of the real Judy Tenuta

By Peggy Aulino  
staff writer

Judy Tenuta's stage persona has an air of superiority, to put it mildly. Give her a topic, she'll tell you why she has little use for it.

"You should be able to ride and brand your love pig," she states matter-of-factly.

And what happens after a woman marries a man?

"He plops himself in front of the TV waiting for the Super Bowl. The only way you can get his attention is to eat until you look like a stadium."

Then there's the Catholic church, another staple in Tenuta's routine. An alumna of "St. Francis of the Talking Mules," she said grade school was "like Catholic boot camp."

OK, OK, you get the idea. But what is Tenuta — who will appear at Chaplin's East in Fraser May 17 through 20 — really like?

After a 30-minute telephone interview, it can be said that Judy Tenuta, at least when dealing with the media, is almost the same on stage as she is off. The jokes come non-stop, and one wonders where she finds time to inhale.

The only difference during a one-to-one encounter and a stand-up routine is that she doesn't insult an interviewer. (During her shows, she's apt to yell at a man in the audience "You make me want to get my tubes tied.")

Friendly as Tenuta is off stage, it's still difficult to get a straight answer out of her.

"I'M SORTING my socks," she said over the phone from her Chicago home. That might sound plausible enough until she adds: "I cleared off my bed and found Jimmy Hoffa."

So the autobiographical sketch she drew in a voice without the raspy quality she uses during performances — probably should be taken with a grain of salt.

She and her sister and six brothers, who have names like Bosco and Bingo, are the product of an Italian/Polish marriage. Her mother forced her to go to Mass every day, and though the Tenutas were on a tight budget, sometimes a priest would be invited to dinner.

"My mother would buy these special, really neat things like food, something that was foreign to us," she said. "We got to have Father Paddy O'Furniture's leftovers."

Has she ever gotten complaints from Catholics about a routine some might call blasphemous?

"No, never once," she said, sounding serious this time. "None of that is malicious. I'm just commenting on it."



Judy Tenuta has invented her own religion — Judyism — and requires of her followers adulation and offerings of canned goods.

But she can't resist adding: "An insult from me is like a blessing from Mother Teresa."

Tenuta, you see, invented her own religion — Judyism — sometime during the dozen years she's been doing stand-up comedy. She requires of her followers adulation and offerings of canned goods.

Another staple of Tenuta's schtick is her accordion. It has been reported elsewhere that she started taking accordion lessons as a child. That's not how Tenuta tells it now.

"It was actually my mother's. I came out playing it," she said. Now she uses the accordion "as an instrument of love and submission."

Nor would she seriously discuss her age, which others have put at 35. "I'm a Goddess so I'm not bound

by mortal time," Tenuta said, but she does admit to using "Ernest Borgnine Beauty Cream" to keep up her youthful looks.

Tenuta has never been married ("The Goddess does not belong to anyone,"), but she doesn't let that fact stop her from offering tips on the topic for the sake of a good joke.

Her advice for husband-hunting women: "Act like a petite flower and virginite, but let everyone know you'll mate with the first Shriener in a Sash."

The Chaplin's East show will not be Tenuta's first visit to the Detroit area. When she was here about 10 years ago, one of the few things she knew about the Motor City was that people set fires at Halloween.

"I thought maybe you were trying to impersonate hell," Tenuta said.

Then she had a suggestion, which involved the other thing she knew about Detroit.

"Maybe you can combine that with the auto production. Why don't they set Lee Iacocca on fire? Put an apple in his mouth."

Judy Tenuta will appear Wednesday through Saturday, May 17-20, at Chaplin's East, 3424 Grosbeck Hwy., Fraser. For reservations, call 792-1902.

Then she had a suggestion, which involved the other thing she knew about Detroit.

## COMEDY CLUBS

Here are some listings of comedy clubs in our area. To let us know who is appearing at your club, send the information to: Comedy Listings, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 30251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

● **BEA'S COMEDY**  
Joe Nipote, Tim Butterfield and "Downtown" Tony Brown will perform Friday-Saturday, May 19-20, at Bea's Comedy Kitchen, 541 Larned, Detroit. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. There also is a new comedy show at 9:30 p.m. Thursday. For information, call 981-2581.

● **CHAPLIN'S EAST**  
Judy Tenuta will appear Wednesday-Saturday, May 17-20, at Chaplin's East, 3424 Grosbeck, Fraser. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 792-1902.

● **CHAPLIN'S PLYMOUTH**  
Tony Hayes will appear Thursday-Saturday, May 18-20, at Chaplin's Plymouth in the Plymouth Hilton, 14707 Northville Road, Plymouth. For information, call 454-4600.

● **CHAPLIN'S WEST**  
Craig Shoemaker, with Tony Brown and Scott Wickmann, will appear Tuesday-Saturday, May 16-20, at Chaplin's West, 16890 Telegraph Road, south of Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 533-8888. Shoemaker will be appearing in a special engagement Friday and Saturday. Tickets cost \$10 those nights.

● **COMEDY SPORTZ**  
Comedy Sportz at the Heidelberg will have improvisational comedy at 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The club is at 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. For reservations, call 995-8888.

● **HOLLY HOTEL**  
Jerry Elliott, with Steve Bills and Jill Washburn, will perform Thursday-Saturday, May 18-20, in the 1891 Room Comedy Club of the Holly Hotel, 110 Battle Alley, Holly. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Thursday and 8:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-9900.

Friday. For information, call 634-5208.

● **JOEY'S**  
Leo DePore will perform Wednesday-Saturday, May 16-20, at Joey's Comedy Club, 36071 Plymouth Road, west of Wayne Road, Livonia. Showtimes are 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday and 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Thursday is no smoking night. For information, call 261-0555.

● **LOONEY BIN**  
Leo DePore, Mark David and Bill Bower will perform Friday-Saturday, May 19-20, at The Looney Bin at The Roxy, 1-94 and Haggerty Road. Showtimes are 9 p.m. Friday and 8 and 10 p.m. Saturday. There's a \$5 cover charge. For information, call 699-1829.

● **MAINSTREET**  
Kevin Meany will perform at 8:30 and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 19-20, at Mainstreet Comedy Showcase, 314 E. Liberty, between Division and Fifth, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$13. Tuesdays are open mike night with a Comedy Jam at 8:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays. Tickets are \$3 and \$6 respectively. For information, call 996-9800.

● **MISS KITTY'S**  
Ken Evans will perform Thursday-Saturday, May 18-20, at Miss Kitty's Comedy Club, Long Branch Restaurant, 595 N. Lapeer Road, Oxford. Showtimes are 8 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For information, call 628-6500.

● **RIDLEY'S COMEDY CASTLE**  
Wayne Cotter will appear Tuesday-Saturday, May 16-20, at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle, 2593 Woodward, Berkley. Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 8:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For reservations, call 542-9900.

## clarification

In a story appearing in Street Scene May 8, comedian "Downtown" Tony Brown was identified as having a small interest in Bea's Comedy Kitchen in Detroit. Brown does not have a financial interest in the establishment, owned by Beatrice Evans.

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**ADVERTISMENT**

**WINNERS OF THE FAME & FORTUNE**

**BY LAURIE KIPPE**

Readers want to know more about the weekly "Fame & Fortune" game show.

Q. How are contestants drawn?

A. Each week the bureau receives approximately 40,000-45,000 TV entries. From among these, 250 are randomly drawn to be included in the draw you see on the "Fame & Fortune" show. At the end of each program, the six contestants for the next week's show are drawn from among these 250 entries.

Q. How are home partners selected to be paired with contestants?

A. After the on-air drawing of six contestants for the following week's show, six more entries are drawn to become home partners. They are paired with contestants in the order drawn.

Q. Are home partners notified in advance?

A. No, this is another surprise element of the show designed to heighten interest. Any player maintaining a TV entry may meet his or her name announced as a home partner at the beginning of the show.

Q. How much do home partners win?

A. Each week, the home partner lucky enough to be paired with the contestant winning the \$5,000 top prize gets a \$500 award.

Q. Are entries not drawn as contestants or home partners held for later drawings?

A. No. After each week's drawings are completed, those entries are destroyed. A fresh batch of entries for the next show includes all those received the next week.

Q. How much has been won on the "Fame & Fortune" game show?

A. Through the 14th show on April 23, the total value of prizes won was \$1,020,221. In addition to the 14 awards of \$50,000 each, prizes included 15 new automobiles, three computer packages, one stereo package, and 61 other cash awards. Home viewers won another \$7,000.

Q. What else does a contestant do on the day of the show?

A. All contestants enjoy a full day of fun and excitement. After a get-to-know-you breakfast at Detroit's Omni International Hotel, they are drawn by VIP Limousine Service to the studios of WJBK-TV for a tour and taping of individual introductions. Then they enjoy a special lunch at the Waldorf Astoria. Following lunch, the contestants are briefed on all elements of the show by a Literary representative. A professional makeup session and a chance to meet the show hosts Chuck Gaudin and Diana Garrety is next. Then contestants are presented by the show's announcer and pose for a souvenir photograph on the set before starting the game. After several of prizes, they return to the hotel for an overnight stay in a luxurious hotel.

Q. What happens if a contestant is not selected to win?

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