

CARLY BARES ALL

Celebrated entertainer to discuss memoir at Read to Grow Nov. 13



PHOTO HEIDI WILD

Carly Simon will discuss her tell-all memoir "Boys in the Trees" in Madison at the First Congregational Church. For tickets, visit readtogrow.org/carly or call 203-488-6800.

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MADISON » In her bestselling memoir, "Boys in the Trees," Carly Simon has tales to tell.

The legendary singer-songwriter will be sharing some of those in Madison on Sunday, Nov. 13 in an event sponsored by the Read to Grow Foundation, whose mission is to get books into the hands of Connecticut's youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

But probably not this particular book.

Take the time the It girl of the 1970s told her therapist about her wonderful evening with Warren Beatty. Her shrink looked stunned.

"You are not the first patient of the day," she said, "who spent the night with Warren Beatty last night."

Then there was the early transatlantic crossing when the virile Scotsman Sean Connery squired Simon and her sister Lucy, then a sisters singing act, about the ship, at one point suggesting a "Simon Sisters Sandwich." They turned him down—or so Carly thought, until Lucy inveigled herself into Connery's cabin alone, effectively ending their duo.

There was also Rolling Stones front-man Mick Jagger. During the recording of "You're So Vain," with Jagger singing background vocals, she writes, "the electricity was raw and hardly disguising its power." And Cat Stevens who, when he was egregiously late for a date, inspired "Anticipation," which would become one of her biggest hits.

All of whom, in addition to Jack Nicholson, Kris Kristofferson, and the novelist Nicholas Delbanco, and many more, [constitute] the "boys in the trees" of her title.

Her process of shaking them free and, in the process, finding her voice, forms the basis of her memoir.

Of course, any need to find her voice may well seem unlikely for the 1970s folk goddess voted the music industry's Best New Artist for 1972, with multiple Grammy Awards two years later lavished on the feminist anthem "You're So Vain."

Not to mention a heady childhood divided between a New York townhouse and a rambling Georgian mansion in Stamford where, as one of four children born to the co-founder of the publishing giant Simon

& Schuster, Jackie Robinson taught her to bat left-handed and houseguests included Benny Goodman, Albert Einstein and Eleanor Roosevelt.

But beneath the glamorous facade of swimming pools, tennis courts and chauffeur-driven cars was a darker reality.

There was her 42-year-old patrician mother disappearing into an affair with the 19-year-old babysitter, moving him into the family home and installing a secret passage between their rooms. There was her father's rejection ("my nose wasn't the only way I disappointed him," she writes) and his depressive episodes exacerbated by his failing marriage. Not least, there was the teenage friend of the family who sexually abused her for years. When her mother discovered what was happening, she banished him from the house, but only for a summer.

All of which conspired to shake the foundations of Simon's world, creating crippling insecurity, and, quite literally, stifling her voice.

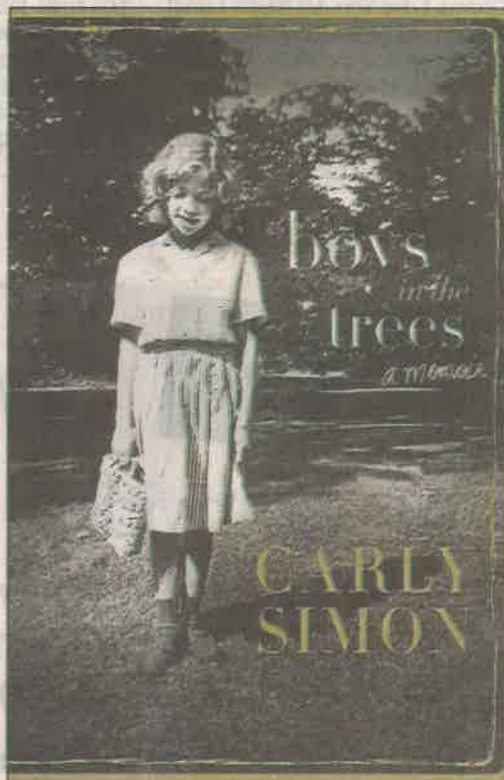
The severe stammer that tanked her academic life and her self-confidence ironically brought her to singing — first, at home, with her mother encouraging her to sing "pass the butter" when she couldn't get the words out otherwise, then in public while a "gangly, gawky" undergraduate at Sarah Lawrence, when she performed a poem for her Italian class to wild applause.

"My speech barriers — its doors, windows, bars — lifted away....I was coming out of my 'singer's closet' by remembering that the melody and rhythm were always there when I needed them," she writes.

If the book is about Simon's voice as a multimillion-selling singer or even as one of pop music's most literate songwriters — she was the first artist to ever win a Grammy, an Oscar and a Golden Globe for her song "Let the River Run" from the movie "Working Girl" — it's writing in this kind of supple voice that sets apart "Boys in the Trees" from other musician's memoirs.

Indeed, considering the 71-year-old could have settled for pages spangled with star-studded names, she displays a boldness in baring her emotions and insecurities, as well as a gift for description.

Take her passage on songwriting. "Writing lyrics became an emotional outlet, turn-



Carly Simon will discuss her memoir at R.J. Julia's Read to Grow event Nov. 13.

ing my own experiences and history into another person's," she says. "By switching from me and I to her and she, I was able to free up the words and emotions inside me."

There's also her account of the first time she laid eyes on James Taylor, another of the boys in the trees of her title. "Even sprawled out on the floor, everything about him communicated that he was, in fact, the center of something—the core of an apple, the center of a note," she writes, before detailing their passionate and tumultuous marriage in compulsively page-turning prose.

Lucky for us, she's lived to tell the tale.

Read to Grow presents *An Afternoon with Carly Simon* at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 13 at First Congregational Church, 26 Meetinghouse Lane, Madison. For tickets, visit readtogrow.org/carly or call 203-488-6800. To make a donation to Read to Grow, either monetary or of gently-used children's books, visit readtogrow.org or call 203-488-6800.