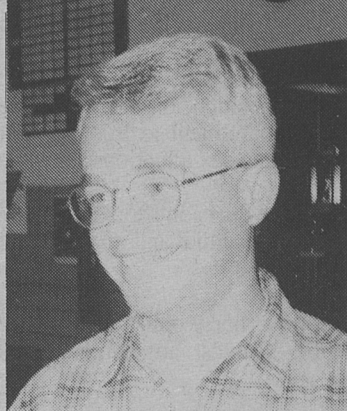




Paula Baker, Rutland, Director of the Rutland Free Library

"(What happened at the Rutland Free Library) is happening all over. Our situation pretty much followed suit. And it was resolved but we are facing more access issues as we go along. We're still working on that. It's not over ... The best thing you can do is to speak up and speak out ... The more we are who we are and say who we are, the less this is going to happen. Then we can't be used against ourselves."

Tim Palmer, Burlington, Executive Director of Vermont CARES



"It's been a great opportunity for me to meet a lot of people that I would not have otherwise met in a setting where we can talk very freely about what's going on and what we need to work on and what works and what doesn't ... It's also recharged my enthusiasm about being here in Vermont ... It's very different from New York where, when we come together as a statewide organization, we spend all of our time beating each other up. This here is a lot of coalition building and recognizing that we have a lot of work to do. And only by working together are we going to get it done."

Cherie Tartt, Burlington, Drag Queen



OITM: So what brings you here today?

Cherie: Men. It's a great place to meet men. They're from all over.

OITM: All over what?

Cherie: All over me, I hope! ▼

Theatre Without Closets:

***A Closet Year* opens in Burlington**

Chris Tebbetts
OITM Staff

BURLINGTON -- The Green Candle Theatre Company will present *A Closet Year*, by Vermont playwright Jan Donley, opening on February 9 in Burlington. It is a story of two women in love and the relationships they find with each other and their families. This play, in addition to last spring's *Losing Steam* about three gay men, has made Green Candle, however inadvertently, a prime source in Vermont for the g/l/b voice in the arts.

The play was chosen on the merits of Jan Donley's script, said director Stephen Sharp, not as a bookend for *Losing Steam* or as a political statement for the theatre company. "We see a lot of new scripts," Sharp said. "This one was outstanding ... It's a true love story, very tender and poetic." He said that the play struck him and other members of the company, not simply as a "lesbian play" but also as a presentation of universal themes -- being in love, being true to one's self, and parent-child conflict. "A heterosexual audience," Sharp added, "is going to be surprised and see a lot of themselves in the show."

Donley agreed, to an extent. "It deals with issues of age, intergenerational gaps, and what we all keep in closets; not just sexuality, but secrets." She conceded, however, that most audiences will probably see it primarily as a lesbian play despite its broad scope. After some thought, she also added, "Actually, I hope people do see it as a lesbian story because there's not enough of them out there."

A Closet Year is a compilation of several one-act "Milly and Grace" plays, as the playwright calls them, named for the two lovers at the center of the story. The one-acts were inspired by a great aunt of Donley's who never married and led the playwright to assumptions of her own. Milly and Grace in the play are, in turn, brought together with the help of Milly's great aunt Elinor.

A combination of circumstances led to Sharp directing *A Closet Year*. Even though he originally imagined that a woman would be directing the play, others in the theatre company came to him, as President of Green Candle and as its only openly gay or lesbian member. "It just worked out this way," he said.

Donley professed a great admiration for theatre professionals and the risks they take, both on stage and off. She is grateful to Green Candle for its willingness to take on new works such as hers, in a business where ticket sales are too often the final word on what gets produced. "Not many people are willing to do 'off' things like this," she said, "not because it's lesbian, but it also plays around with reality, it's not traditional. (For this kind of material) it's hard to find takers."

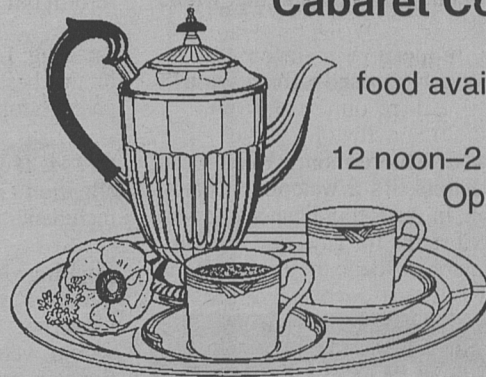
A Closet Year will play at Contois Auditorium in Burlington's City Hall at 8:00pm on February 9, 10, 15, 16, and 17 with a 2:00pm matinee on the 17th. Tickets are sold on the basis of suggested donation between \$5 and \$10; nobody will be turned away by Green Candle Theatre for an inability to pay. For information or reservations, call Green Candle at (802) 893-7333 or the Flynn Theatre Box Office at (802) 86-FLYNN. ▼

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