

## TALKING WITH... UNB Drama Society Play About Women

by Melynda Jaratt

One hundred years after Mary Tibbits graduated from the University of New Brunswick, the newly reorganized UNB Drama Society is producing a play to celebrate her achievement timed to coincide with International Women's Day on March 8.

The play *Talking With...* was written in 1983 by American playwright Jane Martin and is based on the experiences of a collection of women who in both a figurative and literal sense are on the fringes of the society in which they live.

Although Mary Tibbits is not a character in Martin's play, her experiences as the first woman graduate of UNB are seen through the eyes of a former classmate and friend, Bertha Chase, who introduces and hosts the production in a monologue especially written for the production by the assistant director and Stage Manager, Linda McNutt.

Chase entered UNB in 1885 with Mary Tibbits after a long struggle against the University's Senate, which refused to admit them because they were women. Tibbits graduated in 1889. Chase dropped out along the way and since then has become a ghost in the history of women at UNB.

Bertha Chase begins the evening by introducing the play and its characters to the audience. Leading into the other characters to follow, she says "I have a footnote. These women have tonight."

Producer Pam Loughheed says "Bertha Chase was not only a classmate of Mary Tibbits who didn't finish her studies. Like the other women who make up the characters in this play, Chase represents women on the outside, whose lives have been marginalized and who, due to circumstances or destiny, we never heard from again. Compared to her more famous classmate, Mary Tibbits, she is lost to us and to history."

"Bertha Chase makes up



Mary Tibbits, on which one of the characters in *Talking With...* is based.

only a small part of the overall production," explains Loughheed. "The characters here come from all segments of society. They are like a microcosm of women's experience, so it seems appropriate that we have this play, along with Bertha Chase as host, staged concurrently with International Women's Day and the centenary of Mary Tibbits graduation."

Director Jenny Munday, who had developed an impressive reputation around the Atlantic region as an actor and writer, explains that the characters in *Talking With...* are not your conventional heroines of drama. "Indeed," Munday comments, "the characters in *Talking With...* seem to have climbed out of a long-locked closet of eccentricity."

There is Alain: a woman covered with tattoos down one side of her body, each tattoo commemorating some person she has encountered in her strange and wonderful life. Then there is the woman in the midst of childbirth, and Scraps, who dresses up like a figure in the Wizard of Oz in an attempt to escape her

humdrum life as a housewife, and there is Lila: a woman of 65 who has 12 lamps in her loft that she talks to, each lamp a substitute for real people she has met in her life.

*Talking With...* has received considerable support from the University of New Brunswick. Dr. Peter Kent, Dean of Arts, has contributed over \$500 towards the project from the faculty, and the Office of the President, James Downey, has provided \$1,000 to assist with costumes, light rentals, royalty fees, and so on.

There will be four performances of *Talking With...*, which runs from opening day March 8 to March 11. On opening night, there will be a post-production reception in celebration of International Women's Day. *Talking With...* will be held at the Lady Dunn Hall beginning at 8 pm each evening.

Tickets are available at the door, or in advance from Memorial Hall, the SUB office, or any people involved in the production. Students: \$4.00; Non-Students: \$6.00.

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