



## New Face at the Table

Curtains rise on Actors' Table of Eugene

According to local writer and actor Judith McKenzie, her latest project, the Actors' Table of Eugene (T.A.T.E.), takes its cue from an unintentional invention by her late sister, Seattle actress Jane Marie Kinney.

"They always sat at the same table, and the owner took to calling it 'The Actors' Table,'" McKenzie says of The Actors' Table of Seattle, named after a table at the Comet Tavern on Seattle's Capitol Hill where Judith's sister and other actors regularly met for drinks and discussion.

"One night they were there after an audition, and one of the actors at the table started talking about a piece he'd

always wanted to do but never been cast in," McKenzie, who attended a handful of meetings, says. "He had the script with him. The Comet had a stage and microphone, and there was no act scheduled that night, so he and Jean just got up and did a couple of the scenes. The crowd and the owner loved it," she adds.

One performance led to another, McKenzie says, and The Actors' Table became a routine part of the performance schedule at the Comet, as well as a regular way for Seattle theater artists to work together in an informal, cooperative setting. She says it was her hope to duplicate that sense of collaboration when T.A.T.E. celebrated

Eugene's female actors with its inaugural reading June 30 at Tsunami Books.

When McKenzie moved to Eugene, she noted that "the energy and talent in Eugene theater reminded me a great deal of the energy and talent in Seattle in those days. It also happened, synchronicity being what it is, to be the anniversary of my sister's death, and the idea hit — I should

do an Actors' Table in Eugene," she says. "I talked to a number of people," McKenzie explains, "and eventually raised enough money to stage the first two events."

The June 30 performance, a free event entitled "Seasons of a Woman's Life," featured a phenomenal group of women who have been enthralling Eugene audiences for years, such as Jane Vogel, Kim Donahey and Emily Hart.

"I have been fortunate to attract some of Eugene's finest actors for the first two events," McKenzie explains, "but I also envision these events offering opportunities for actors new to the Eugene community to get some exposure and connect with others in theater."

Each actress performed a favorite scene or monologue reflecting the theme of the

gatherings. "I see the Actors' Table as showcase productions, offering the Eugene community a chance to see actors performing pieces that they deeply love, which creates a unique energy and passion on the stage."

T.A.T.E. looks to be an innovative way to bring local actors together, and a beautiful way to honor McKenzie's sister, who passed away in 1998.

The second T.A.T.E. meeting, open to male and female actors, is scheduled for Sept. 8 at Tsunami Books. The theme of the performance is "Life Changes," and proposals to participate are due by July 21; for guidelines or further information, visit [judithmikesch@yahoo.com](mailto:judithmikesch@yahoo.com)

*For more info or to find out about future T.A.T.E. performances, email [judithmikesch@yahoo.com](mailto:judithmikesch@yahoo.com)*

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— JUDITH MCKENZIE

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