

A BIT OF HISTORY ABOUT THE SOMERS VILLAGE PLAYERS ...THE 15 YEARS FROM 1996 TO 2011...

Malcolm Chadbourne, a charter member of the Players, wrote a reminiscence of the group from its inception in January 1971 until December 1995. The following pages will attempt to carry on where Mal left off, beginning in January of 1996 as the Village Players celebrated 25 years of producing plays in Somers.

I joined the VP in 1978 after moving to Somers from Enfield, and was welcomed with open arms – partly because I brought with me assets from the defunct Enfield Stage Company, which had folded after a fire destroyed most of their sets and their spirits. As with Mal’s commentary, this bit of “history” is filled with my memories, and told from my perspective. While the VP fiscal and theatre year runs from May through April, this account is presented in calendar years. Any omissions are either from a lack of written information or poor memory! A special thanks to Mal & Joanne Chadbourne for their comments and guidance as this piece was coming together.

For the program of the 25th celebration of dinner-theatre at Aya-Po (2002), I wrote the following, and would like to repeat it here. “...the Players have had a chance to look back and remember people who have given of themselves in so many ways. Actors get to enjoy the applause, but much of the credit always goes to the movers and shakers (sometimes literally) behind the scenes. Thank you to everyone – for all of it.”



Shirley Elliott (Courtois) Warner

Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration & 1996

On January 20, 1996, the Players celebrated their 25th anniversary with dinner at the Somers Inn Barn. Many members and friends attended and enjoyed musical entertainment by ‘Le Cabaret.’ There were door prizes and fun “awards.” Somers’ First Selectman Robert Percoski declared it Somers Village Players Day. It was a well-deserved celebration marking the progress from an idea to an active theatre group devoted to producing plays and supporting the arts.

Ironically, the same week as the celebration, the two round storage buildings on the Mountain Road property caved in from a big snowfall on January 16th & 17th. Most of the props and stage settings were lost, many costumes destroyed and the buildings were not salvageable. A big clean up followed. What could be saved was moved to Millpond and, temporarily, a room in Kibbe Fuller. The remaining rubble was burned. Our insurance did not cover our loss. It was a difficult time for the Players. Members pulled together, and continued with their primary reason for existence... putting on a show!

Shows

Is There Life After High School, a musical, was already in the planning stage – adjustments were necessary because of the loss of sets, etc. & the show went on as scheduled at the high school. Luke Olivieri, who also did the musical direction, directed the show. Producer was Sara Moriarty. A

dinner put on by the SHS Food Service Department was offered before the show to appeal to those patrons accustomed to dinner-theatres. There was dinner music provided by Rick Sommers & Tippe Canoe. Not popular with our audience, the show lost \$400.

In the fall, the dinner-theatre at Aya-Po featured *A Bad Year for Tomatoes*, directed by Mal Chadbourne, and the price of tickets was \$20. Sue Moak was Producer. New flats were constructed for the show, replacing those lost in the building collapse. This was the year that the YWCA moved the kitchen wall, creating more seating room in the hall, but a smaller kitchen. Kitchen staff was required to make many adjustments. The dinner-theatre was still very popular, and we had no trouble filling more seats. (*Editor's note: We just had to keep Dee Moak from selling too many!!*) John Moak was still our chef and Kay McNamara baked the desserts -cheesecake was the most popular! George Warner took over bar management, a job he would do for the next ten years at Aya-Po dinner-theatres.

The Players entered the ActConn festival with *The Whole Truth*, a one-act play with two characters. Kathy Welch and Lee Ann Madersky took the parts and Mal Chadbourne was the advising director. Kathy received Honorable Mention as best actress.

Other

In keeping with our VP goals, workshops and programs with a dramatic theme were a continuing part of our meetings. In May, the puppetry students from UConn gave a presentation.

Wendy Peterson directed a summer Children's Theatre for the 10th year. Forty students in three classes of theatre and structured improvisations met for two weeks in August, and were divided into three age groups from 1st through 8th grades. On the final evening, each group performed on the elementary school stage (old high school).

Scholarships for students pursuing dramatic arts went to Lindsay Calder, John Walker, and Jon Block.

1997

Shows

The spring show was a comedy, *The Foreigner*, directed by Shirley Warner with Sue Moak as Producer. The trap door to the 'basement' of the set provided a challenge on the elementary school stage, but tech director Scott Davis managed to pull it off. Again, while the show was delightful, the profit was only \$301. This prompted discussion about doing spring shows at the schools, and whether or not it was worth the effort. The dinner before the show was at the high school to accommodate the food service department, but patrons did not like two separate locations.

At Aya-Po, we produced *Spirit*, directed by George Dawson. Difficulty in finding a volunteer to act as Producer resulted in the Players Board sharing production duties. Not the best of arrangements; it was never tried again.

Other

Children's Theatre was still going strong in the summer.

John Walker received our scholarship.

1998

Shows

A Spring Extravaganza of One Acts was presented at Johnson Hospital Community Building in March, and actually showed a profit of \$900. Three shows were staged with three distinct sets, and Bob McDonald from the UConn drama department adjudicated. The three were -*Third & Oak: The Laundromat*, directed by Mal Chadbourne; *Indiana Shuffle*, directed by Carolyn Robins, and *The*

Plumbers Apprentice, directed by Scott Davis. *Indiana Shuffle* by Ann Pie', competed at the ActConn festival, where it was runner-up for best show.

The Latest Mrs. Adams, directed by Jean Burns, went on the boards at Aya-Po with John Lepore producing. Producing plays at Aya-Po was always challenging. Members had to move tables, chairs, sets, lights, costumes, dishes, tablecloths, food, etc. etc. up the hill from Somersville. We were fortunate to get the help of NETTTS trucks and drivers, decreasing the number of pick-up truck loads considerably. It was also a labor-intensive project. In addition to the show cast and crew, many prep-cooks, car parkers, waiters, and dishwashers volunteered to cover all the production nights. We offered beer and wine for sale during dinner, which required a liquor license and expensive liability insurance.

Other

The Players were always looking for ways to increase membership, and continued to give black t-shirts with the VP logo to every member.

Sometimes our meeting programs were just for fun – one night Linda Perkinson raided the costume room and had everyone wear hats during the meeting. We took turns reading from a melodrama and did improvised skits with assigned props. Members also enjoyed a Christmas party at Judy Snyder's.

At one meeting during the year there was discussion – and dissention – but we raised dues to \$10 (from \$5).

February found the Players involved in real estate issues. We signed a 10 yr. lease with the Town of Somers for continuing use of the Millpond building, in exchange for \$1 a year and maintaining the premises. We sold our land on Mountain Road to Dee & John Moak for \$45,000. This 2.2 acre property was given to the VP by Larry Browne in 1978 and abuts the Moak land. With the storage buildings destroyed, we no longer had any use for it. Membership also voted to donate \$5,000 to Most Holy Trinity Monastery in Petersham, Massachusetts – where Larry Browne now lived.

With our newfound wealth, the group invested in some mutual funds – Vanguard \$9,556 / SafeCo \$4,049 / American Century \$4,674. Our 98/99 season budget showed income of \$10,048. Money was earmarked to improve Millpond. Originally, we voted \$20,000 for improvements, and later added \$3,500 to complete the work. Members, under the guidance of Scott Davis, did many of the improvements. These included: new kitchen cabinets, flooring, new rest room, removal off 2nd old rest room & turning the space into storage, new furnace, emergency lights required by the Fire Marshal, hanging racks for costumes and shelving for storage, and fresh paint throughout the building. We also bought a storage building to house flats, platforms and other large pieces and installed it behind the Millpond Playhouse.

In February, everything contracted at Millpond was complete – for spring we planned a new sidewalk, insulation, & air conditioners, which were all completed. In addition to these big projects, the building costs the Players several thousand dollars every year for utilities and maintenance. Special thanks are due Charlotte Stenlake. She has volunteered her time to keep the kitchen and rest room areas clean and stocked with supplies for many years.

We gave two Scholarships: Erick Fleck & John Walker were the awardees.

1999

Shows

Still exploring the best venue for productions, the auditorium at The Grammar School on Maple Street (the former Somersville School) was a consideration for *The Nesters*. However, the tech crew

determined the problems were too difficult and the show was presented at the Somers Elementary School in March, with Theresa McGoff Ferreira directing and John Lepore producing.

Fall at AyaPo featured an Agatha Christie mystery, *The Mousetrap*, directed by Shirley Warner. The set was unique with a large window reaching up to the rafters. John Lepore was Producer. Ticket price was still \$20, and the profit \$8,603.

Other

An August picnic at Moak home (and pool!) had become almost a tradition, and everyone looked forward to a pleasant afternoon relaxing with friends. It was also an opportunity to tie up some loose ends before the dinner-theatre at Aya-Po.

There were 31 students at Children's Theatre classes in August.

John Walker, a previous scholarship winner, spoke about his school experiences at one of our meetings. Scott Davis gave some classes on lighting and design during the year. We also had a workshop on Shakespeare.

Scholarships awardees were Kate Maderski, Jonathan Block, Becky Davis, and John Walker.

2000

Shows

The Last Night at Ballyhoo directed by Charlie Moore was presented at Somers High School. John Lepore was Producer. A dinner by SHS Food Service was also offered. This show had the challenge of having multiple settings.

We tried something new at Aya-Po - a musical, *Nunsense*. Gus Rousseau directed, with Bill Pelt handling musical direction, and Kim Schmidt the choreography. Marilyn Brossmer was Producer. It had been a number of years since the VP had done a musical, and it was well received.

The group selected a melodrama, *The Daring Dr. Deavereau & His Dastardly Deeds*, for a spring show, but it was never produced.

Other

Unfortunately, an attempt at sponsoring a one-act playwriting contest in conjunction with the Cultural Commission short story contest did not generate much interest. We did not award a prize to any of the three entries.

At the summer picnic at Moaks', a lively portrayal of *Casey at the Bat* entertained us.

The Children's Theatre moved their performance night to the Somers High School stage, where air conditioned splendor was much appreciated!

Mal Chadbourne & Charlotte Stopa presented a short play, *For Anne*, at the January meeting. Our October meeting featured a panel discussion on directing led by Mal Chadbourne & Shirley Warner.

Scholarship awardees were Rosemary Traceski, Christina Munson & Anthony Beck.

2001

Shows

The only show this year was the dinner-theatre at Aya-Po. *The Cemetery Club*, directed by Gus Rousseau, and produced by Marilyn Brossmer. Women "of a certain age" were featured in the cast.

This show was presented shortly after the attack of 9/11. We made special mention of those who were lost that day, those who were heroes, and displayed a large American flag in the hall in support of our country.

Other

Entertainment by the Cameo Club (Mrs. Senior CT competitors) was provided at a meeting. They danced and sang and dazzled us.

Several members participated in the town Memorial Day program with patriotic readings.

Scholarships were awarded to Rob Kozaczka & Kim Schmidt.

2002

Shows

In the spring, *Chapter Two* with Ed Lewis directing, was presented at the high school. Still looking for ways to increase our audiences, we tried a matinee preceded by luncheon. The SHS Food Service served the luncheon and pre-show dinners. Betty Domer was Producer.

The fall dinner-theatre was a celebration of 25 years at Aya-Po. Some special activities arranged by Sue Moak, Wendy Peterson, Mal & Joanne Chadbourne and Trish Endweiss marked the occasion. Former members were recognized at each performance and a fun quiz about previous shows was given to patrons. We had placemats listing all the Aya-Po show titles, and a wall display of old programs. All the businesses and individuals supporting the VP over the years were recognized in the program. Our play selection was *Sylvia*, directed by Shirley Warner, and it was a very popular choice. (\$10,186 profit) Joyce Benson was Producer. The set was a change from the standard flats, with only black curtains and set pieces defining different areas.

Other

Once again, VP members participated in the town Memorial Day ceremony with readings.

Scholarships were given to Kim Schmidt & Joy Traceski.

Trish Endweiss opened her home to a "thank you" party for Aya-Po workers...something she would do several years.

2003

Shows

Lost in Yonkers, directed by Gus Rousseau, was produced at the High School. The SHS Food Service Department offered a pre-show dinner; once more we hoped to attract more patrons. Joyce Benson was Producer.

Who's On First, a silly comedy about time, was the show at Aya-Po, with Bill Laurel directing and Joyce Benson producing. In an effort to accommodate those finding the trek to the camp difficult in the dark, we added a Sunday matinee without the dinner at a reduced price and we offered desserts. Attendance was very low at these shows, and we eventually discontinued them.

Other

The Millpond building has only a partial unheated cellar and, during the winter, pipes froze under the building. After repairs, the pipes were wrapped with electrical insulation to prevent the problem from happening again.

The Players sponsored the first grade classes at SES on a field trip to see a play.

The annual picnic was held at the Moaks’.

Scholarships went to Kim Schmidt (3rd award), Cara Hanscom, & Dan Capagna

Mal Chadbourne put together a Reader’s Theatre in October of 2003. Held at Piedmont Hall, it offered a segment of *Anastasia* and other shows.

2004

Shows

We tried something new and unusual for our spring show at the high school. A brand new play by Michael Harvey of Lyme, CT, *Tango Trabjo*. Michael also did the program cover design. Director Ed Lewis encountered several problems along the way, and the show did not do well. In addition, the pre-show dinner was not well attended, so the Players made a donation to the Food Service program to make up for their lost revenue. Co-Producers were Joyce Benson and Betty Domer.

The Miss Firecracker Contest was produced at Aya-Po, with Bill Laurel directing. Betty Domer and David Crowell were Producers. A lively show, it required an interesting set with multiple scenes. In the kitchen, preparations were sometimes observed by squirrels peeking over the rafters. Some of the show proceeds were donated toward the purchase of defibrillators for the Somers schools.

Other

Mal Chadbourne put together a “Play on Words,” some short readings presented by members at Piedmont Hall in February. One of the most innovative was a series of paragraphs from the Speak Out section of the Reminder. Another short one-act presentation, *The Porch*, was later expanded to a full length play by the playwright.

At play selection time in April, two shows, *Proof* & *The Glass Menagerie*, made the cut. Both shows ran into difficulty. We could not acquire the rights to do *Proof*, as it was being performed professionally elsewhere in the state. *The Miss Firecracker Contest* was chosen as an alternate show. *The Glass Menagerie* also had problems the following spring – 2005.

In October, SHS drama coach Kathy Welch made a pitch for help and in response, membership voted to give \$6,000 to the Drama Club toward their campaign to buy sound equipment for the high school stage.

Scholarships went to Joy Traseki, Elizabeth Carlson, and Kim Schmidt.

2005

Shows

In February director Mal Chadbourne regrettably cancelled *The Glass Menagerie*, as he was unable to cast the show. Consequently, no spring production was staged. Our inability to do a serious play was mourned by many in the group.

The dinner-theatre at Aya-Po featured a musical review, *Cole*, with Gus Rosseau directing a large cast of singers, including three high school students. Stu and Joyce Benson loaned us their baby grand piano, which was the centerpiece onstage. Frank Jackson was pianist and Musical Director. David Crowell was Producer. The set was elegant with black and silver. It was lively and well done and publicity was excellent, however, attendance was low and our income suffered. The group pondered ‘why?’ Is our audience tired of Aya-Po and its inconveniences? Was a musical review the wrong choice? We hoped to reach out to different segments of the population next time.

Days before the show was to open, there were some hectic moments. The YWCA had replaced the ramp to Avery Hall with a larger porch. However, the handicap ramp access was not complete

and the Fire Marshall threatened to shut us down. Some good rapport with town officials made it possible to get a crew to lay some blacktop in time for opening night. (Thank you, George Warner!)

Other

A workshop, a segment of *On the Verge*, (featuring Sue Moak, Sherry Samborski, and Wendy Peterson – directed by Shirley Warner) was presented at Millpond. This event was part of an attempt to do a series of Thursday night coffeehouses with staged readings at Millpond, every other month on 3rd Thursdays. While the idea met with membership approval, it soon fizzled out.

The Players always made an effort to work within the community, offering their talents and support in a variety of ways. One example: Shirley Warner & Mal Chadbourne presented a short play called *I'm Herbert* at Somers Congregational Church for a Women's Club event. They repeated the performance at a VP meeting.

The VP held another workshop. *Love Letters* was held at Piedmont on three different nights, with three different casts (Mal Chadbourne/Shirley Warner- Dana Ring/Dorrie Mitchell & Tara West/Dave Crowell) and directed by Bill Laurel. Very small audiences attended, even though attendance was free.

At the request of the Somers Fire Department, Stephanie Wakelin & John McKone appeared as the "grieving parents" for the mock fatal prom crash scene presented at the high school.

To facilitate securing a liquor permit for our Aya-Po dinner-theatres, we had previously established a separate group called the Millpond Association. This group was required to meet annually, which it did in June.

A Scholarship was awarded to Christopher Houlihan who would use it toward music education at Trinity College.

Running the organization of the Village Players was getting more and more difficult. Paying annual dues had always been the criteria for membership. However, fewer people were becoming bona fide members with even fewer attending meetings. It was a problem the group would wrestle with for several years.

After a long absence, the Players entered a float in the Four Town Fair parade. Kelly Boucher and Dee Moak spearheaded the effort with a painting session at Millpond and everything was assembled in the Moak barn. Members rode the float wearing costumes from previous plays. The float also promoted the up-coming dinner-theatre. We were not awarded a prize... but we felt like winners!

This was the year of serious October flooding in Somersville and other parts of town. The water came close, but spared our building. Yellow tape marked off our parking area for months and extensive repairs were needed in the area.

2006

Shows

In March, "Radio Daze," an old time radio show, was presented at Kibbe Fuller. Scripts from actual 1940's shows (Burns & Allen, The Shadow etc.) were read, and "acted" by several members. Sound effects were done on stage with old-fashioned materials. Prop microphones were made to look like old ones. It was a lot of fun for a small amount of effort; tickets were only \$5, and we had a nice audience.

Death by Chocolate, directed by Dorrie Mitchell, was our dinner-theatre show at Aya-Po. We had become very comfortable doing shows there. However, it still involved bringing everything up the hill in advance of the show. And... hauling it all back down again. A large volunteer staff was also necessary every night. The facility continued to deteriorate and we encountered more problems because of it. Setting up for dinners was more difficult because of a large squirrel population. Animal droppings on the tables prevented us from setting tables ahead of time. The old dishwasher was on its last legs and the YWCA had no plans to replace it.

With the chocolate theme, we had a dessert “raffle” during each show. Patrons were able to buy tickets for a chance on homemade goodies, with the proceeds going toward scholarships. This event has continued since then and our scholarship fund has received several thousand dollars from this event over the years.

.. A funny anecdote came out of the show. As was our custom, Joanne Chadbourne decorated the mantel in the hall with the show theme in mind. There was lots of chocolate... bars, bags, etc. We discovered that the squirrels seemed to favor the ones with nuts! And so, John Moak put his have-a-heart trap in front of the fireplace. The next day, sure enough a squirrel was in the cage... only he had not survived. We decided it was... death by chocolate. Later we found another dead squirrel under the stage. At the October meeting, we held a moment of silence for the squirrels.

Other

Because of the continuing problems at Aya-Po, membership voted to look for another venue. A committee began a search. (As our community and our group changes, we are probably wise to make changes, too!)

Repairs were made to the chimney at Millpond. And then, a new problem. Workmen on the dam discovered that our crawl space was full of water. It was a leak in the water line, and the water company was responsible for fixing it. We had to do some minor repairs to the insulation on the water pipes. We also discovered our water heater had sprung a leak, so it was replaced.

Thirty-eight children attended Wendy’s summer theatre classes. Afterwards the phone in the Millpond building was eliminated as a cost saving measure, as most members had cell phones.

Amanda Marschall received our scholarship.

A long range planning committee was formed, sent out questionnaires and gathered information, but no definite plans were adopted.

By-Laws were updated after review and suggestions by Wendy Peterson & Mal Chadbourne.

2007

Shows

In April a one act-play, *Life Is Only Seven Points*, and selections from *The Dining Room* were presented at Kibbe Fuller. Our audience was smaller than that of the radio shows, but more people had a chance to perform on stage.

The VP presented a Parade of Costumes in June. Called an “Afternoon With the Village Players,” it was presented on a runway-like a fashion show at Joanna’s – for charity. The plan was to explore the possibility of doing plays in this location. The show did not raise much for “Make-a-Wish,” but we did gain some understanding of how the space worked.

At the January meeting, we voted not to return to Aya-Po, and followed the search committee’s recommendation to move to Joanna’s Banquet Center in Somersville. It was a bitter-sweet decision. *Don’t Drink the Water* directed by Gus Rosseau, was our first dinner-theatre at Joanna’s. The stage

was at floor level much like 'theatre in the round.' However, sight lines were not good. We also discovered that seating estimates were too high. Discussions began about how to work around these problems and still do a profitable dinner-theatre at that location. It is necessary for us to show a profit in order to maintain the Millpond building and give our scholarships.

We learned something about publicity. Little "teaser" signs saying "Don't Drink the Water" were put out and prompted calls to town hall asking what was wrong with Somers water supply!

Other

Justin Martin was managing and improving the technical side of our productions. A new sound system was purchased for use on shows.

In February, special thanks were given to John Moak for his 30 years of managing the kitchen at Aya-Po. Lots of memories!

Our ways & means efforts were revitalized by George Warner and we realized a nice income from our patrons.

Scholarship winners were Courtney Schiessl and Victoria Sepe.

Sherry Samborski and Peter Desaulniers represented the Players at the Chamber of Commerce merchants expo in December.

The group held a holiday party at Millpond in December with a presentation of *Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge*, put together by Ron Blanchette.

2008

Shows

Modifications made in Joanna's Banquet Hall enabled us to erect a stage at the street end of the room. The VP paid half the cost of altering the banisters to make them removable. We spaced tables for better sight lines, and for the first time, we tried two shows at Joanna's. *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* (directed by Dorrie Mitchell) was chosen for dinner-theatre in the spring and *Best of Friends* (directed by Shirley Warner) in the fall. Both shows netted a profit, and the group seemed to have evolved into a 'two-dinner-theatres a year' routine. Betty Domer was Producer. The dessert raffle started at Aya-Po continued, with the income designated for our scholarship fund. The group was still "tweaking" the timing and arrangements to make the show attractive to more people. Repeat patrons could always be counted on at Aya-Po, but we were still in the audience-building stage at Joanna's.

Other

To promote the VP, Justin Martin and David Crowell began the process of setting up a web page.

More t-shirts were ordered to replenish our supply and make sure everyone working on a show received one.

An Open House meeting was held in March with an excerpt from *The Sunshine Boys* performed by Mal Chadbourne & Shel Freedman, and a Burns & Allen radio show, featuring Shel and Mirelle Freedman.

The scholarship winners were Allison Hall, Amanda Marschall and Tess Plotkin.

2009Shows

Fall Dinner-theatre at Joanna's was *Rumors* by Neil Simon and directed by Gus Rousseau. We welcomed Kathy Welch back to the VP stage in this production, and also welcomed newcomer Franc Argus as set designer. Betty Domer was Producer.

In the spring, we presented *Dearly Departed* directed by Mark Depathy. Franc showed his talent with a multi-set design that included two automobiles... very cleverly done! The deep south locale kept stage manager Sue Moak stocking up on corn dogs for every show. This show also marked the debut of Diane Preble as Producer. Betty Domer had been doing an efficient job in that position for several years, and continued to advise Diane in this important theatre position.

Other

Wendy Peterson continued producing and teaching Children's Theatre summer classes. Her classes are always full and she has given so much of her time to this annual event... Bravo! And Bravo again!

The Players expressed some concern about the fate of the Millpond building in light of the Somersville revitalization proposed by the town. With the old lease agreement on Millpond out of date, and assurance that the building would remain, we signed a new, dollar a year, ten-year lease with the town. The VP continues to be responsible for the upkeep of the building and immediate grounds. Either party may terminate with 60 days notice.

Work continued on a web page, www.SomersVillagePlayers.org, giving us the ability to reach more people. Justin kept information shown there up to date.

Scholarships were awarded to Amanda Marschall, Paul Leitz & Seth Price, who was an Enfield High graduate. This was the first time a scholarship was given to someone not living in Somers.

2010Show

Spring dinner-theatre at Joanna's was *Over the Checkerboard*, and marked the debut directing effort of our president, David Crowell. Improvements made to the stage area included new platforms, as part of an on-going project to improve staging. Diane Preble was our Producer for both the spring and fall shows.

Fall Dinner-theatre at Joanna's was *Run For Your Wife*. We welcomed a new director, John Nelson. Several veteran actors, new to our group, appeared on the VP stage.

Other

After much discussion, the membership approved the revised by-laws. The most significant changes were to qualifications for membership. Payment of dues no longer constitutes active membership. Instead, participation in VP activities and attendance at meetings will be the criteria for voting members. Supporting members will be those who donate dues. Other major changes included eliminating all references to kitchen & house management at Aya-Po; revising what office holders sit on the executive committee; and requiring advance information from the play reading committee regarding the shows being considered.

It became obvious that the windows in Millpond were literally ready to fall out and needed to be replaced. Research on the building determined that it is designated historical, so new windows need to look age appropriate. Members voted to spend the money for this project, and windows were installed by Home Depot in September. Lead was detected in the framing, requiring extra work. New blinds for the windows were also purchased. A leak on the back side of the building could not be

ignored. An outside contractor was hired to make repairs to the roof – including a new ceiling in the rest room. These improvements cost the group over \$9,000.

Members realized the roof was over 20 years old & began to investigate the need for re-roofing. In addition, the town was contacted about the possibility of getting prisoners to re-paint the exterior, and the building was put on the list for town projects.

The Millpond building also got a new look inside. Ron Blanchette, Housing Chair, began a project to display the framed posters and lobby pictures from various shows in chronological order. With the help of some members, they were cleaned up, some re-framed and re-hung in the meeting room.

Scholarships: In order to streamline the budgeting process, members voted to take the spring 2010 scholarships from the '09-10 budget. These were awarded to Paul Lietz (2nd yr. theatre major at Eastern) & Sam Plotkin (SHS Senior planning to study music in Nashville)

Wendy Peterson had another full house for the Children's Theatre in August.

The aluminum chairs originally salvaged from Hamilton Standard, and that served us so well at Aya-Po, were found to have considerable value. Unfortunately, the current economic situation has deflated their worth. It was decided to hang on to the 85 we still have for a while, and hope the price goes back up. We voted to give eight of them to Jennifer Domer in thanks for all her free graphic design work.

The December meeting was also party time, with libations, snacks, and a reading by David Crowell and Betty Domer.

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Over the last fifteen years, we have lost many dear friends and members. Kay McNamara, Blinky Calder, Larry Browne, Andy Percoski, Scott Davis, Jane Tyler, Rink Blake, and Fred Domer were among those we mourned.

Looking ahead to the future...

The Village Players have had a very successful run of forty years. We hope to celebrate in some meaningful ways during 2011. The year begins with auditions for our next dinner-theatre. An anniversary repeat of an early Players production, *Arsenic and Old Lace* is in the works for the spring dinner-theatre at Joanna's in April.

In 1996, Mal posed some questions. Could the VP look forward to another 25 years? We're almost there! The dream we had then, of acquiring our own theatre, remains a dream. The storage issue seems to be resolved and Millpond Playhouse at 55 School Street is still our 'home'. Most importantly, we are still producing plays!

There is some unfinished work at Millpond, and hope of finding ways to increase participation at meetings. The Players are financially sound – we have come a long way from the days of begging and borrowing to put on a show. Our mission includes offering training and education in the performing art. As a group, we need to explore how to engage more people in workshops to gain experience – and just for fun. The Players will to continue to re-invent themselves as times change. On with the show!!!

OFFICERS – SOMERS VILLAGE PLAYERS - 1996-2011

<u>Season</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Vice President</u>	<u>Secretary</u>	<u>Treasurer</u>
<u>95/96</u>	Tim Welch	Sara Moriarty	Sue Moak	George Warner
<u>96/97</u>	Shirley Warner	Sue Moak	Wendy Peterson	Joyce Benson
<u>97/98</u>	Shirley Warner	Sue Moak	Wendy Peterson	Joyce Benson
<u>98/99</u>	Marilyn Brossmer	John Lepore	Avonne Robbins	Betty Domer
<u>99/00</u>	Marilyn Brossmer	John Lepore	Avonne Robbins	Betty Domer
<u>00/01</u>	Joyce Benson	Marilyn Brossmer	Charlotte Stopa	Betty Domer
<u>01/02</u>	Mirelle Freedman	Joyce Benson	Charlotte Stopa	Trish Endweiss
<u>02/03</u>	Betty Domer	Joyce Benson	Wendy Peterson	Trish Endweiss
<u>03/04</u>	Betty Domer	Joyce Benson	Wendy Peterson	Trish Endweiss
<u>04/05</u>	Shirley Warner	David Crowell	Dee Moak	Betty Domer
<u>05/06</u>	Shirley Warner	David Crowell	Dee Moak	Betty Domer
<u>06/07</u>	David Crowell	Bill Laurel	Dee Moak	Betty Domer
<u>07/08</u>	David Crowell	Betty Domer	Joyce Benson	Shirley Warner
<u>08/09</u>	David Crowell	Betty Domer	Darlene LaPointe	Shirley Warner
<u>09/10</u>	David Crowell	Diane Preble	Darlene LaPointe	Shirley Warner
<u>10/11</u>	David Crowell	Diane Preble	Sue Moak	Shirley Warner