**Close Ties**

**By Elizabeth Diggs**

The scene is a country home in the Berkshire Mountains of New England, where three generations of the Whitaker/Frye family have gathered for the summer. Josephine Whitaker, the matriarch of the family, still bustles about energetically tending her garden and issuing orders to the others, even though she has long since given the house to her middle-aged daughter, Bess Frye, and her husband, Watson, who is now a senior partner in the law firm founded by his late father-in-law. Also present are the Frye children, three daughters and a teenaged son, and Ira Bienstock, the unlikely lover of one of the Frye daughters, who arrives uninvited but quickly ingratiates himself with Josephine and the others. While concerned with family ties, and the tensions, misunderstandings and good-natured bickering which arise from such closeness, the ultimate focus of the play is on Josephine, who is edging into senility and, in the family's view, must no longer be allowed to live alone. It is the resolution of this problem, which so many must face in today's world, that provides the very believable—and deeply moving—conclusion of this most human and genuinely affecting play.