



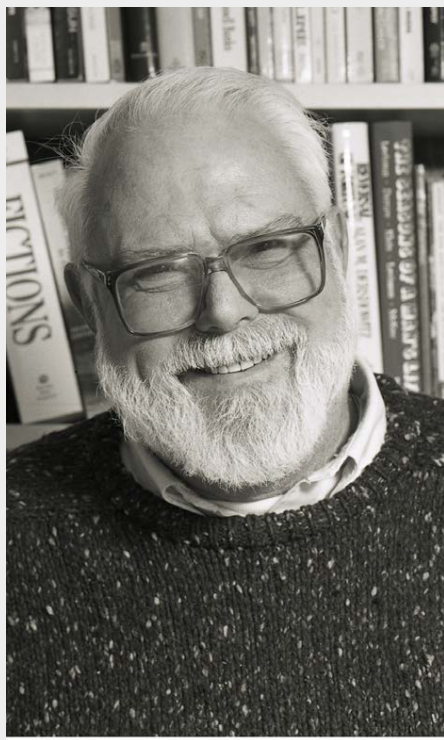
# New Book Offers Lessons From America's Greatest Writing Teacher

Media Contact: [Lori Wright](#)

603-862-0574

UNH Media Relations

Oct. 14, 2009



Don Murray

DURHAM, N.H. – “Be patient, listen quietly, the writing will come. The voice of the writing will tell you what to do.” – Don Murray

For nearly 60 years, University of New Hampshire professor Don Murray was a tireless explorer, chronicler, and advocate of writers, writing, and the teaching of writing. Through the years and over numerous books, academic articles, newspaper columns, classroom handouts, writing conferences, and warm collegial conversations, thousands of students, writers, and teachers benefited from Murray’s work.

A new book, “The Essential Don Murray: Lessons From America’s Greatest Writing Teacher,” (Heinemann 2009) carries on his work and shows the evolution of his thinking by collecting his most influential pieces as well as unpublished essays, entries from his daybook, drawings, and numerous examples of his famous handouts. The collection is edited by Thomas Newkirk, *professor of English*, and Lisa Miller, *associate professor of English*.

“No one studied the writing process as obsessively as Murray did, and no one wrote about it as eloquently and incisively. His very lucidity, we feel, may have caused some contemporary scholars to diminish the intellectual work that is represented in these essays. We hope that this collection will allow a new generation of writing teachers and aspiring writers to appreciate both the utility and depth of Don’s work,” Newkirk and Miller said.

Murray’s lessons are profound. On teaching writing, he said it should be a process, not a product. “Instead of teaching finished writing, we should teach unfinished writing, and glory in its unfinishedness,” Murray said.

On knowing the writer within, Murray said, “There is always magic in this for me, and wonder because I do not know what I am going to say until it is said.”

And on doing the work of writing, he said, “Writing is primarily not a matter of talent, of dedication, of vision, of vocabulary, of style, but simply a matter of sitting. The writer is a person who writes.”

Murray won the 1954 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing at the Boston Herald and had a distinguished career as a reporter, including at *Time* magazine. For 20 years he wrote a weekly *Boston Globe* column, called at first "Over Sixty" and later "Now and Then." He established the journalism program at the University of New Hampshire and was one of the original framers of an academic movement that revolutionized the way English composition was taught and written about. He published more than 10 books on the writing process and its teaching as well as poetry and fiction.

He died Dec. 30, 2006, at age 82. Murray donated his collected papers to Poynter's Eugene Patterson Library in the mid-1990s.

"Don's death left a hole in many hearts. The samples of his prodigious output on display in this collection provide testimony to the power of the writing process and his commitment to never let a day go by without a line written," said Chip Scanlan, senior faculty – writing, The Poynter Institute.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

#### **PHOTO**

Don Murray

[http://www.unh.edu/news/img/Murray\\_Don.jpg](http://www.unh.edu/news/img/Murray_Don.jpg)