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UNH Welcomes Natalie Jacobson As 2008 Visiting Journalist

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Jacobson will be on campus for the week of March 24, 2008. On Tuesday, March 25, she will give a free public talk in which she will reflect on her 35 years covering the news for WCVB Channel 5 in Boston. The talk begins at 5 p.m. in the Memorial Union Building, Theater II.

Sponsored by the UNH Journalism Program, the Donald Murray Visiting Journalist Program brings accomplished alumni journalists to campus each year for week-long residencies during which they conduct classes, work with students and student media, and give a public lecture.

Jacobson, ’65, was the first female news anchor in Boston, a position she retired from in 2007. During her visit to UNH, she will discuss how she saw local television news change during her anchor years, and what she envisions for its future.

According to Jacobson, television news found its calling during the 1970s.

“There were no rules, only ideas to be turned into programs. There were no boundaries beyond honesty and fairness. There was no issue too big to cover. Political correctness had yet to be born. We were in lockstep with our viewers, whom we saw as fellow citizens,” she says. “We were partners in the most difficult of stories, such as busing and Vietnam, as well as historic moments -- when we were live for eight hours covering Queen Elizabeth’s royal visit to Boston, or when the blizzard of ’78 shut down the city for a week. We were the epicenter of information, the glue that held everyone together.”

Jacobson recalls how her managers supported her when she secured an exclusive interview in which Joan Kennedy discussed her problems with alcohol and her marriage to Ted Kennedy, who at the time was running for president. The station aired the full 23-minute interview, and Jacobson wonders whether something like that would happen today.

“Do the bean counters allow good reporting today?” she wonders. “Are reporters lazy? Is local news relevant? Do we cover candidates and campaigns or just the rhetoric? Are we living up to our responsibility as the fourth estate? Are we serving our country?”

The Donald Murray Visiting Journalist Program is named in honor of Donald Murray, the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer who started the UNH journalism program in 1963. Terry Williams ’80, publisher of The Telegraph of Nashua, led the fundraising drive for the program, with primary support coming from The McLean Contributionship and from UNH journalism alumni.
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For more information about the event, contact Jane Harrigan, professor and director of the UNH Journalism Program, at 603-862-3968 or jane.harrigan@unh.edu.

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