



UNH Welcomes Dana Jennings As 2010 Donald Murray Visiting Journalist

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DURHAM, N.H. – When Dana Jennings, '80, learned that he had prostate cancer two years ago, he did what any self-respecting journalist would do: he wrote about it. A reporter for *The New York Times*, he began a column for the newspaper's blog Well, submitting essays every few weeks about his treatment, his thoughts, and his recovery. Soon his entries were receiving hundreds of readers' responses. Two of the columns were so lauded that they were selected to appear in "The Best American Medical Writing 2009."

Learning to write for a new medium – the Internet – at the age of 51 after dedicating the previous 30 years to writing everything from newspaper columns to magazine features to novels, struck Jennings as both "strange and interesting." The bottom line, he says, is that he was just following the advice of his mentor, writing legend and UNH professor Don Murray: "Write about what makes you different."

Jennings will honor his mentor next month when he returns to the University of New Hampshire as the 2010 Donald Murray Visiting Journalist. In this role, Jennings will visit UNH journalism classes during the week of April 5-9, 2010, meet with *The New Hampshire* staff, and present a talk titled "My Brief Life as a Woman: a Veteran Journalist-turns Cancer Blogger" at 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 6 in MUB Theatre II. The event is free and open to the public.

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.

While Jennings is eager to talk about his experience as a middle-aged blogger, he is also looking forward to sharing his experiences as a newspaper journalist (in 17 years at the *New York Times*, he has edited for both sports and news sections and written for every department from styles to home to the book review), a freelance magazine writer (his work has appeared in a variety of publications, including *Esquire* and *New England Monthly*), a novelist ("Women of Granite," "Lonesome Standard Time," and "Mosquito Games"), a children's book author ("Me, Dad, & Number 6"), and a memoirist ("Sing Me Back Home: Death, and Country Music," and "What a Difference a Dog Makes; Big Lessons on Life, Love, and Healing from a Small Pooch," which will be released next November by Doubleday).

Jennings also has worked for the *Wall Street Journal* as an editor and for the *Manchester Union Leader* as a general assignment reporter. He was born and raised in Kingston, not only the first person in his family to graduate from college, but also the first person in his family to attend high school.

The UNH Journalism Program looks forward to Jennings' visit in which students and the greater UNH community can learn not just about the writing life, but about what it means to write with grace under fire. A sample of his prose:

"The most disturbing part of my recent post-treatment depression was when this thought – 'Why don't I kill myself?' – would float to the surface of my consciousness, like a fat trout feeding at dusk. I would quickly nudge it away, never let it set its awful hook in my gray and foggy brain."

The Donald Murray Visiting Journalist Program is named in honor of the late 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. Recent visiting alums include former TV anchorwoman Natalie Jacobson and sportswriter Jackie MacMullan.

For more information about this year's visiting journalist, please contact Sue Hertz, director of the UNH Journalism Program, at 603-862-3966 or susan.hertz@unh.edu. 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.

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