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Stephen Taylor Awarded UNH Alumni Association's Prestigious Pettee Medal

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DURHAM, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire Alumni Association will present its most prestigious award for extraordinary achievement and distinguished service to the state, the nation, and the world, to Stephen H. Taylor '62 in a ceremony Tuesday, April 6, 2010, at 11 a.m. in Huddleston Hall. To attend the Pettee Medal award ceremony, please RSVP no later than March 22 by contacting the UNH Alumni Association at (800) 891-1195.

Taylor was commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, serving five governors and retiring in 2007. His role encompassed promoting and protecting agriculture, commerce, consumers and the environment, but he likely is best known throughout the region as a lifelong farmer, journalist, and advocate of his alma mater, UNH. Taylor was an ex officio member of the University System of New Hampshire Board of Trustees, establishing a record for length of tenure on that body.

His years as commissioner brought together two of his lifelong passions: farming and news writing. A political science major at UNH, Taylor served as editor of the student newspaper, The New Hampshire, and began his career as a newspaper reporter and editor after graduating in 1962 and serving in the Army. In 1970, Taylor and his wife, Gretchen, established a maple and dairy farm in the Plainfield area where he had grown up. Run by the Taylors and their three sons, the Taylor Farm continued to operate at full capacity during Steve's years in office; today, the enterprise includes a 120-head dairy herd and the Taylor Brothers Sugarhouse and Creamery.

While he was commissioner, he penned "100 Things You Should Do To Know The Real New Hampshire," and he did not limit the list to what most Granite Staters and tourists already know about the state. For instance, he recommends raking blueberries in Gilmanton or Brookfield, joining a coon hunt through Connecticut Valley corn fields, and attending a Grange meeting. Perhaps Taylor's signature publication was the much-anticipated Weekly Market Bulletin, where subscribers could find everything from dry cordwood, to rabbits and horses, to David Bradley walk-behind tractors.

He played an instrumental role in establishing the New Hampshire Humanities Council and Leadership New Hampshire. He was founding executive director of the Humanities Council, an organization that promotes scholarship and public engagement in the humanities. He was a founding board member and board chair of Leadership New Hampshire from 1993-1998. Leadership New Hampshire educates and encourages citizens for leadership roles in the state. Taylor currently serves on several not-for-profit boards and is a lecturer on New Hampshire agricultural history for the Humanities Council.

A New Hampshire native, Taylor has lived almost his entire life in Meriden Village, a section of Plainfield. He and his wife, Gretchen, '62, met at UNH. Two of their three sons—James '87 and William '89—are UNH graduates.
The Charles Holmes Pettee Medal was established by the UNH Alumni Association in 1940 to recognize individuals who exhibit the rare devotion to service expressed by the life of Pettee, who served the university for 62 years as professor and dean until his death in 1938.

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