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Alum, Pulitzer Prize Winner To Discuss Journalism Career At UNH Feb. 22

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DURHAM, N.H. – Pulitzer Prize-winner Kevin Sullivan has covered wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, economic meltdown in Japan and the horrors of the Mexican criminal justice system, and has chatted with the King of Pop and the queen of England.

Sullivan,’81, will discuss these experiences and more in the talk, “Do I Look Scared To You? An Optimist's View of Modern Journalism,” Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2011, at 4:30 p.m. in MUB Theatre I. The event is free and open to the public.

As the Donald Murray Visiting Journalist for 2011, Sullivan, who is Sunday and features editor for The Washington Post, will visit UNH journalism classes Feb. 21-24. Though he's seen many changes in journalism during the past 32 years, Sullivan believes two things are still true: Journalism is an exciting way to make a living, and our society needs good journalists.

“We use different tools now, but we're still practicing the same core skills of journalism: reporting, writing, telling stories, informing, unearthng, enlightening--and sometimes entertaining,” Sullivan said. ”We provide important and useful information. We tell stories people need to hear.

“Yes, times are changing. Yes, print is struggling. But no matter how the technology evolves, news organizations from The Washington Post to Patch to whatever other organization pops up before dinner still need smart journalists to provide information and stories to help them rise above all the noise. Change is unsettling, but it should still be an exciting time to be a young journalist.”

Sullivan was a Washington Post foreign correspondent for 14 years. Sullivan and his wife, Mary Jordan, were the newspaper’s co-bureau chiefs in Tokyo from 1995 to 1999, Mexico City from 2000 to 2005, and London from 2005 to 2009. Sullivan then served as deputy foreign editor and foreign editor.

He and Jordan won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for their coverage of the Mexican criminal justice system. They, with four Washington Post photographers, were finalists for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for a series of stories about difficulties facing women around the world. They also won the George Polk Award in 1998 for coverage of the Asian financial crisis, as well as awards from the Overseas Press Club and the Society of Professional Journalists.

Sullivan has reported on six continents from more than 70 countries. He was raised in Maine and graduated from the University of New Hampshire in 1981.

Sullivan didn't come to UNH planning to become a journalist.

"Don Murray got me into journalism,” he says. "A friend had taken his intro journalism class and couldn't stop talking about his fantastic professor, who looked like Santa Claus, talked like a Marine and had a Pulitzer Prize. I had never thought about journalism -- I had never thought about much more than hockey and baseball, truth be told -- but I knew I loved to write.

“So I signed up for Don's class, and after about 15 minutes with that man, I was hooked. If Don Murray was what journalism was all about, I needed to be part of that. That was 32 years ago, and I’ve never looked back.”

During his time at the Post, Sullivan studied Japanese and East Asian affairs at Georgetown University in 1994-95 and studied Spanish and Latin American affairs as a John S. Knight fellow at Stanford University in 1999-2000.

Sullivan and Jordan are also the authors of "The Prison Angel: Mother Antonia's Journey from Beverly Hills to a Life of Service in a Mexican Jail." The book won the 2006 Christopher Award, which honors works "that affirm the highest values of the human spirit." Sullivan and Jordan have two children and live in Washington.

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. Sponsored by the 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. Recent visiting alums include Dana Jennings of The New York Times and Steve Damish of The Enterprise in Brockton, Mass.

The program is sponsored by the UNH Journalism Program, the UNH English Department, the Telegraph of Nashua, and the McLean Contributionship.

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 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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