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Like Father, Like Daughter: UNH Professor's First Novel Pays Tribute To Her Father, A Former UNH Professor



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Ann Joslin Williams


DURHAM, N.H. – Ann Joslin Williams, assistant professor of English at the University of New Hampshire, grew up observing the craft of writing -- her father, UNH English Professor Thomas Williams, was a National Book Award-winning novelist.


Many of his stories were set in the fictional town of Leah, New Hampshire, and on nearby Cascom Mountain, locations that closely mirrored the landscape of the Williamses' real summer home in northern New Hampshire. Now, with her first novel, "Down From Cascom Mountain," Ann Joslin Williams proves herself a formidably talented novelist in her own right, while paying tribute to her father by setting her debut novel in the same fictional world -- the New Hampshire he imagined and that she has always known.

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"When I started writing I often set my stories on the mountain where my parents had built a cabin and where I'd spent my childhood summers. After reading one of my stories in which I'd given our mountain a name he didn't care for, my father suggested I use his fictional geographical names. He passed them on to me, and I'm honored to use them in my fiction now," Williams says.

To celebrate the publication of Ann Joslin Williams' first novel, her father's debut novel, "The Hair of Harold Roux," is being reissued by Bloomsbury, USA, which also is publishing Ann Joslin Williams' book.

"I was thrilled when my publisher suggested that they'd like to reissue my father's book at the same time as mine. I've always wanted to get my father's work back into print. It's humbling, too, since I have a long way to go before I even come close to what he achieved. Mostly, I'm just really proud to have this tribute to him while starting on my own path as a novelist," she says.

Ann Joslin Williams will read from her novel and promote the reissue of her father's book at the RiverRun Bookstore in Portsmouth Tuesday, June 7, 2011. The event begins at 7 p.m. For more information on upcoming readings, visit www.annjoslinwilliams.com.

In "Down From Cascom Mountain," newlywed Mary Hall brings her husband to settle in the rural New Hampshire of her youth to fix up the house she grew up in and to reconnect to the land that defined her, with all its beauty and danger. But on a mountain day hike, she watches helplessly as her husband falls to his death. As she struggles with her sudden grief in the days and months that follow, Mary finds new friendships -- with Callie and Tobin, teenagers who live and work on the mountain, and with Ben, the gentle fire watchman. All are haunted by their own losses, but they find ways to restore hope in one another, holding firmly as they navigate the rugged terrain of the unknown and the unknowable, and loves lost and found.

Williams grew up in New Hampshire. She earned her MFA in fiction from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and was a Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University. She is the author of "The Woman in the Woods," a collection of linked stories, which won the Spokane Prize for Short Fiction, and her work has appeared in "StoryQuarterly," "Iowa Review," "Missouri Review," "Ploughshares," and elsewhere. She was awarded an NEA grant for her work on "Down from Cascom Mountain."

Ann Joslin Williams' father Thomas Williams taught at UNH for 32 years. His short stories appeared frequently in "Esquire," "The New Yorker," "The Saturday Evening Post," and elsewhere. His first novel, "Ceremony of Love," was published in 1955. He went on to write seven more novels and a book of short stories; another collection of his stories, "Leah, New Hampshire," was published posthumously. Williams was nominated for

the National Book Critics' Circle Award and twice nominated for the National Book Award, winning in 1975 for "The Hair of Harold Roux."

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.

PHOTO

Ann Joslin Williams

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