

Media Relations

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"A Family's Loss" Is Second Novel for UNH Thompson School Professor



Tim Barretto, professor of communications at the University of New Hampshire's Thompson School for Applied Science, has published his second novel, "A Family's Loss" Credit: Lisa Nugent, UNH Photographic Services.

DURHAM, N.H. – Family love, family secrets, and family mythologies are at the heart of the new novel by Tim Barretto, a professor of community leadership at the University of New Hampshire's Thompson School of Applied Science. "A Family's Loss" is the second novel by Barretto, who is co-founder of the school's community leadership program.

"A Family's Loss" (Beech River Books, 2013) tells the story of "what happens when love in a family either isn't present or isn't a healthy kind of love," Barretto says.

Set in a fictional New Hampshire town, "A Family's Loss" is told from the point of view of Virgil, the oldest of four children, as he reflects on events of what he believed was a healthy childhood in the 1960s. When tragedy strikes in the 1970s, Virgil must question everything he assumed about his family and examine the past for answers. Sifting through his earliest memories, Virgil makes an uncomfortable discovery about his mother and two of his siblings, Jake and Lydia. Barretto writes:

"It was not until dinner on the day of Lydia's First Communion that I finally began to put everything together and glimpse the truth of what was going on: Mother treated Jake differently not because she loved him more than the rest of us but because of just the opposite. Mother expected Jake to fail. And this was

acceptable to her as long as his failures did not involve the rest of us. But when he attacked Lydia—however justified he might have been—it was something Mother absolutely could not abide.

"Later, when Jake tried to run away and everyone wondered how he could do such a thing, I thought I understood."

Barretto describes the book as posing universal questions: "How much of my understanding of my past is real? How much of it is family mythology and how much have I created myself?" he says.

In addition to teaching and writing, Barretto has spent most of his adult life pursuing ways to eliminate child abuse. "A Family's Loss," which deals with elements of abuse in its plot, draws on this work. "In some ways, the research for this book has been going on for 35 years," Barretto says.

Barretto teaches writing, speaking, and literature at the University of New Hampshire's Thompson School of Applied Science. He and colleague Kate Hanson co-founded the community leadership program at the school in 2001 as a way of helping students interested in becoming activists and community leaders to find and develop their voices. In addition to his previous novel, "Searching for Joy," his creative work includes short stories published in literary journals and a one-act play about bullying that was performed at several schools in New Hampshire's Strafford County. He has served as a passionate advocate for children. He lives in Dover, New Hampshire, with his wife, Mary.

Read a profile of Tim Barretto here: <http://www.unh.edu/facultyexcellence/2008/excellence.cfm?image=barretto>

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.

Photograph available to download: <http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2013/feb/barrettoIn.jpg>

Caption: Tim Barretto, professor of communications at the University of New Hampshire's Thompson School for Applied Science, has published his second novel, "A Family's Loss"
Credit: Lisa Nugent, UNH Photographic Services

Book cover available to download: <http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2013/feb/Loss.jpg>

Caption: "A Family's Loss" is the second novel by Tim Barretto, professor of communications at the University of New Hampshire's Thompson School for Applied Science

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