

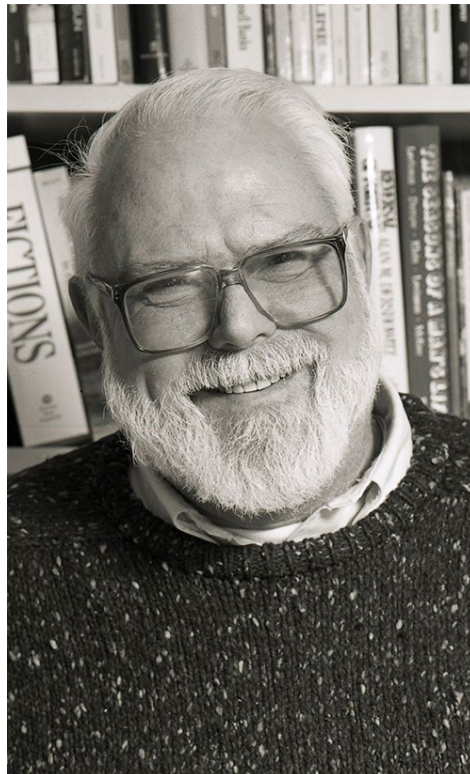
Preserving Don Murray's Legacy

Author's daybooks now home at UNH

Tuesday, August 29, 2017



That longtime journalism professor Don Murray '48 regarded writing as a job is nowhere more evident than in his daybooks: hundreds of spiral-bound notebooks, some covering a period as brief as six weeks, crammed with the business of a writing life — writing schedules and word counts, essays and poems for inspiration, drafts of Murray's own columns and others' work, annotated with Murray's tiny, crabbed script.



For more than 20 years, those daybooks sat in file boxes — some 126 of them — alongside Murray's journals, letters and other memorabilia at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, a nonprofit school for journalism in St. Petersburg, Florida. Now, more than a decade after the writer's death, they're back at the [Milne Special](#)

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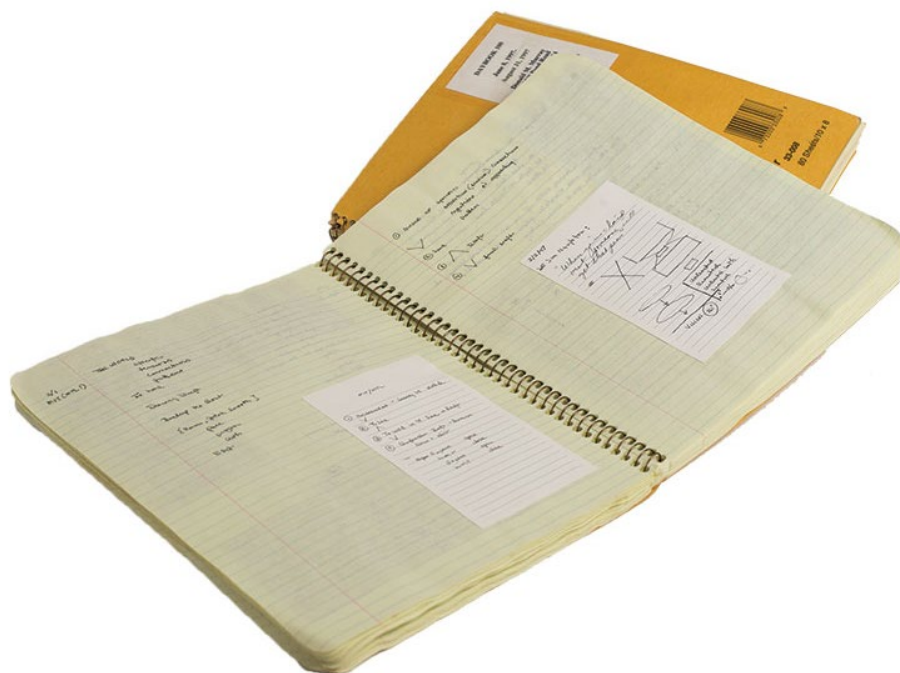
Sneak Preview

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**In Honor of His
Grandmother**

[Collections and Archives](#) at [Dimond Library](#), their return made possible in part by former students who recognized the importance of possessing the literary effects of the man some have called the country's most influential writing teacher.

Murray was a legendary figure in Durham: a high school dropout who earned an English degree from UNH, began writing for newspapers immediately upon graduation and won the Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing at the age of 29 — the youngest writer to receive that particular prize. The author of 13 books, including nine focused on the craft of writing, he was known for his generous mentorship as much as his prolificity, and head archivist Bill Ross jumped at the opportunity to reclaim the records that capture at least some of the workings of his writer's mind. "We were sad to see everything go to Poynter," Ross says, "and when they reached out to say they were phasing out their library and did we want to have it back, we said absolutely."

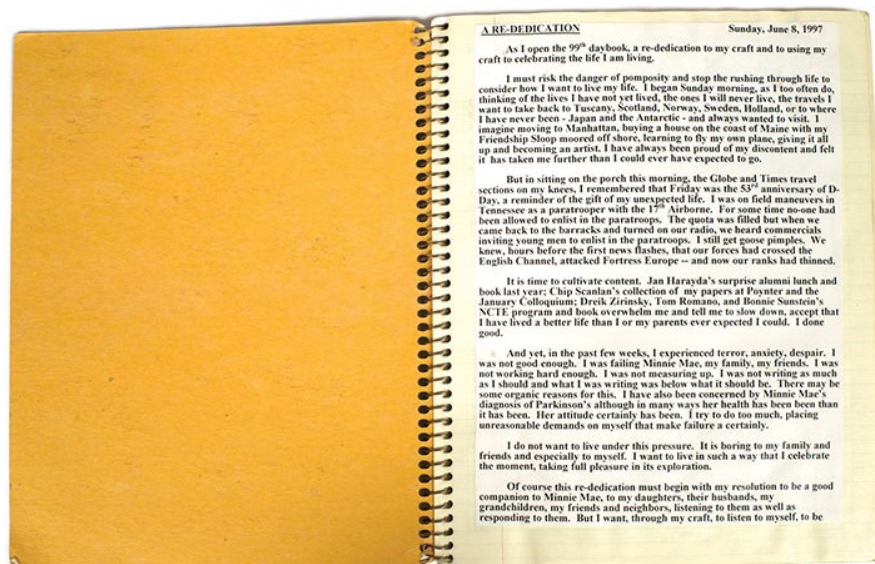


Credited with founding the [journalism program](#) at UNH, Murray is perhaps best known for his Boston Globe column, "Now and Then," which chronicled life with his beloved wife Minnie Mae and daughters Hannah, Anne and Lee. (Lee died at the age of 20, a

heartbreak covered in Murray's last published book, "The Lively Shadow: Living With The Death of a Child"). At UNH, he championed an approach to composition teaching that emphasized process and changed the way it was taught at every educational level. His own process is documented extensively in the records, which arrived in five massive boxes in May.

A group of Murray's former students raised the funds to ship the boxes back to New Hampshire. Now, Ross is hoping to get some additional funding to have the collection fully catalogued.

Comprising thousands of documents, it's unlikely to become digitized, but Ross hopes to develop some sort of finding aid to help researchers navigate the contents of the boxes.



Mike Michaud '92, '07G, an associate professor of English at Rhode Island College who is researching an upcoming book on Murray and the UNH English department, is among those who say having hands-on access to Murray's records is invaluable. "When I came up here, I was not expecting much," he says, noting that while he'd done some preliminary legwork at Poynter, he wasn't given direct access to the archives and only received a fraction of the materials that were available. "The book I'm writing just became a lot richer because of this material."

—Judi Currie, *adapted with permission from Seacoast Online*



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