

Lost and Found

Looking back on the 30th anniversary of the Challenger disaster

Thursday, January 28, 2016

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ANDREW MERTON

On this 30th anniversary of the loss of the space shuttle Challenger, UNH Today looks back with professor emeritus of English Andrew Merton.

Back in the winter of 1986, Merton was a faculty member in the UNH department of English, and his son Gabe was a first-grader at a local elementary school.

Merton recalls: “On Jan. 28, K-12 teachers throughout New Hampshire brought TVs into their classrooms to enable their students to watch the Challenger launch. New Hampshire’s Christa McAuliffe was to be the first teacher in space. Then, of course, it all went wrong, and the classroom teachers were left to grapple with how to deal with the tragic developments.”

The events of that day moved Merton to pen a poem called “Lost and Found,” in which Merton, the teacher, celebrates McAuliffe, the teacher.

After nearly three decades, Merton recently published “Lost and Found” in a collection of the same name. Here is the poem.

Lost and Found

for Gabe and in memory of Christa McAuliffe, Jan. 28, 1986

In winter

the big wooden box

in your school cafeteria

fills with boots, sweaters, sweatshirts,

hockey pucks, scarves,

and, on the day

they brought in a TV

so you and your friends

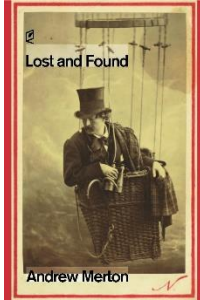
could watch a teacher

leave earth,

one small sky-blue mitten.

—Andrew Merton

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Merton will read from “Lost and Found” at Gibson’s Bookstore in Concord Feb. 4 at 5:30 p.m. and at the Water Street Bookstore in Exeter Feb. 10 at 6:30 p.m.

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