Writing a doctoral dissertation can be a long, lonely process, with years passing between the dissertation’s start and its completion. For some graduate students in the UNH History Department, the process is made a little easier by having Bill Harris in their corner. The author of four critically acclaimed books that examine the history of the South, Harris knows well the rigors of crafting a lengthy work, and the difference a good mentor can make to a project’s success.

“The adviser-student relationship has to be a personal one,” Harris says. “When you’re working with someone on a project of the magnitude of a dissertation or a master’s thesis, it’s critical to be on the same page with them—in every sense.”

Since his arrival at UNH in 1985, Harris has distinguished himself as a devoted and active adviser. Students praise his responsiveness, thoroughness, creativity, and humor. His colleagues are quick to mention his integrity and dedication to his students, his breadth of knowledge, and his impeccable scholarship.

“Graduate students appreciate Bill as an adviser who routinely ‘goes the extra mile’ on their behalf, coaxing better work from them than they thought possible,” says Associate Professor of History Jeffrey Bolster. “His genuine respect for each of them as individuals is legendary.”

Harris has earned accolades for his own published work. *Deep South* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and *Library Journal* named *The Hanging of Thomas Jeremiah* an “outstanding book of the year.” And yet he wouldn’t consider himself a born historian—the Georgia native attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology intending to become a biochemist. He switched tracks after several history courses piqued his interest, and to hear him tell it, the two disciplines are not entirely unrelated.

“History is somewhat like a science, rooted in evidence and logic, but then overlaid with art, craft, and judgment,” he explains. As he describes quantitative criteria for good historical research, the importance of defining the right questions in ways that can be answered, it is easy to see the intellectual zeal he shares with his students, the truth in the assertion made by his colleague Bolster that, “UNH is a much better institution because Bill Harris works here.”

—Kristin Duisberg