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University of Dayton

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Feb. 6, 2002
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NEWS RELEASE

PHIL DONAHUE, TOP HUMORISTS TO HEADLINE WRITERS' WORKSHOP HONORING ERMA BOMBECK, VIRTUAL MUSEUM TO BE LAUNCHED

DAYTON, Ohio — Bruce Cameron wrote a book that made *The New York Times* bestseller list, has a television pilot under development with ABC and is supposed to take the trash out to the curb on Wednesday mornings.

Columnist Mickey Guisewite divides her time between contemplating the world and attempting to get juice box stains out of the back seat of her car. Author Patricia Wynn Brown's 22-year-old son is majoring in "Individual Studies" in college, which has her mystified and seeing a dermatologist for an itchy rash.

The University of Dayton has attracted more than 20 prominent humor writers, human interest columnists and editors for a March 9, 2002, writers' workshop to pay tribute to the life and work of Erma Bombeck. The workshop, which sold out more than two months early, has attracted 250 attendees from 28 states and Canada.

"We had strict guidelines for selecting speakers for the workshop," said Tim Bete, co-director of the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop and Internet humor columnist. "They had to be able to change a diaper in an airplane restroom in less than two minutes and convince a teenager to make his or her bed. They also had to be accomplished humor writers, pros at writing from the heart or experts in the field of publishing."

Loretta LaRoche, author of the best selling book, *Relax—You May Only Have a Few Minutes Left*, will give the morning keynote address. LaRoche has appeared on PBS television and been published in many magazines and newspapers, including *USA Today*, *The Boston Globe* and *The*

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Atlantic Monthly. *Get a Life*, LaRoche's weekly column is published every Monday in *The Patriot Ledger's* lifestyle section.

Phil Donahue, host of the popular, Emmy award-winning TV talk show, *Donahue*, and Bill Bombeck, Erma's widower, will highlight the lunch with anecdotes about Erma. Donahue lived on the same street as the Bombeck family early in his career. In addition, "An Evening with Phil Donahue" will take place at 8 p.m. on Friday, March 8, in the Kennedy Union Ballroom on campus. That speech, part of UD's Distinguished Speaker Series, is free and open to the public, but tickets are required. Visit or call UD's box office in Kennedy Union at (937) 229-2545 to reserve tickets. The box office is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

Two University of Dayton graduates will speak at the workshop. Katie Struckel Brogan, editor of *Writer's Market* and former associate editor of *Writer's Digest* magazine, will give talks on how to get published. Terry Eberle, editor and vice president of the *Indianapolis Star*, has worked for 30 years in the newspaper business and will present sessions on the "newspaper life."

Matt Bombeck, a screenwriter who focuses on made-for-television movies and Erma's son, will also speak. Bombeck has produced movies for NBC and ABC and won the Writers Guild of America award for long-form television in 1994. He is currently working on a movie for the Lifetime Network. Other presenters for the writers' workshop include:

- Columnists W. Bruce Cameron (Creators Syndicate), Mickey Guisewite (Universal Press Syndicate), Mike Harden (*Columbus Dispatch*), D.L. Stewart (*Dayton Daily News*) Craig Wilson (*USA Today*), Mary McCarty (*Dayton Daily News*), Susan Ager (*Detroit Free Press*), Laura Pulfer (*Cincinnati Enquirer*) and Tim Bete (Internet humor columnist).
- Authors Patricia Wynn Brown (*MOMMA CULPA: One Mother Comes Clean and Makes Her Maternal Confession*) and Judy Gruen (*Carpool Tunnel Syndrome: Motherhood as Shuttle Diplomacy*).
- Editors Lee Salem (executive vice president and editor of Universal Press Syndicate), John Kachuba (*How to Write Funny*) and Rachel Vater (*2002 Guide to Literary Agents*).

For three decades, Erma Bombeck celebrated the extraordinary in the ordinary and chronicled life's absurdities in a syndicated column carried by 700 newspapers prior to her death of kidney disease in 1996. She credited the University of Dayton with preparing her for life and

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work, for making her believe she could write. She graduated in 1949 with a degree in English and never forgot that she got encouragement as a writer at the University of Dayton.

Bombeck gave back to the University in numerous ways. She served on the board of trustees from 1984 to 1987; co-chaired with her husband the National Alumni Challenge Campaign during the University's capital campaign in the 1980s; spoke at events on campus, including a writers' workshop; and participated in advertising and direct-mail campaigns to help broaden the University's image and recruit students. In 1981, she received an honorary doctorate from UD, and she was named an honorary trustee in 1988.

At the April 2000 writers' workshop, the Bombeck family officially donated Erma's artifacts to the University of Dayton. Many of the artifacts are featured in the Erma Bombeck Online Museum (www.ErmaMuseum.org), which will be unveiled at the writers' workshop lunch.

The writers' workshop, Phil Donahue's public address and the virtual museum are part of three days of special events honoring Bombeck. Bill Bombeck will present awards to winners of the annual Erma Bombeck Writing Competition at 7 p.m. on Thursday, March 7, at the Washington-Centerville Public Library, 111 W. Spring Valley Rd. This year's competition attracted more than 550 entries from around the country. The Bombeck family will be on hand to help dedicate UD's Bombeck Family Learning Center at 10 a.m. on Friday, March 8. The family donated \$1 million to transform UD's child care center into an early childhood education demonstration school. Although the workshop is sold out, the public is invited to attend the Phil Donahue speech on Friday, March 8, and meet authors at a group book-signing/networking reception at 5:30 p.m. in the Torch Lounge in Kennedy Union on Saturday, March 9.

The events are co-sponsored by UD's National Alumni Association; *Dayton Daily News*; Washington-Centerville Public Library; Books & Co.; ActiveDayton.com; WYSO-FM; WHIO-TV; Andrews McMeel Universal; *Writer's Digest* Book Club; and Suburban Newspapers of Dayton.

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For more information, see erma.udayton.edu. To arrange media interviews or for photos of the presenters, contact **Teri Rizvi** or **Tim Bete** at (937) 229-3241.