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## Rare Erma Bombeck Columns Released for Viewing; Teen-Ager Already Possessed Trademark Wit

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## NEWS RELEASE

*(Editor's Note: You can view the rare columns at <http://www.ermamuseum.org/arkay.htm>. A link to the columns can also be found on the museum main page – [www.ErmaMuseum.org](http://www.ErmaMuseum.org). For interviews or questions about the site, contact Tim Bete at (937) 229 4960.)*

### RARE ERMA BOMBECK COLUMNS RELEASED FOR VIEWING; TEEN-AGER ALREADY POSSESSED TRADEMARK WIT

DAYTON, Ohio – Long before Erma Bombeck waxed eloquent about the perils of raising children and training husbands, she wrote tongue-in-cheek columns about taking the bus to work, filling in for the boss while he's on vacation and experiencing problems with escalators.

In 1946, at 19, Erma Fiste took a part-time clerical job in the personnel office of Rike's department store in Dayton, Ohio. One of her tasks was writing for the *Arkay News*, the store's monthly employee magazine, in which Erma illuminated "the human side of just everyday humdrums that make you laugh at yourself in spite of any old situation." Fifteen of her columns from the *Arkay News* are now part of the Erma Bombeck Online Museum ([www.ErmaMuseum.org](http://www.ErmaMuseum.org)).

"Each year on Erma's birthday we add items to the Erma Bombeck Online Museum," said Tim Bete, humor columnist ([www.TimBete.com](http://www.TimBete.com)) and museum curator. "It's our way of honoring Erma and giving her millions of fans something to help remember her."

Erma Bombeck would have celebrated her 78th birthday on Feb. 21, but the gift of her humor lives on because of the online museum created by the University of Dayton with the Bombeck family. Bombeck graduated from UD in 1949. Her syndicated column was carried by 700 newspapers prior to her death of kidney disease in 1996.

"Erma's writing was as crisp and funny at age 19 as when her career took off 20 years later," Bete said. "Even when she was young, she had the ability to see the hilarious in everyday events."

In one *Arkay News* column, Erma described the many benefits of working at Rike's

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Department Store: "...Rike's hospital would give me my Carter's Little Liver Pill free of charge if I needed it—I could consume 2,624 calories for only 26 cents in the store cafeteria, and if I adhered to my criminal tendencies, I could even clip recipes from the magazines in the ladies' lounge."

In another column, about her experience as a sales clerk, Erma wrote, "I wasn't behind the counter five minutes when I spotted a prospective customer headed toward the door. Using the old running tackle that brought victory to Notre Dame in 1935 I apprehended him. 'I don't believe you've seen our notions counter,' I said jumping up and down on his chest."

All 15 columns, which were originally published between August 1946 and November 1947, can be read in their entirety in the online museum. Original copies of the magazines are located in the Rike's Historical Collection in the Special Collections and Archives at Wright State University.

The Erma Bombeck online museum was launched in February 2002. The museum includes audio and video clips of Erma's family and friends, such as Phil Donahue, Bil Keane, Mike Peters and Liz Carpenter. The museum also contains rare photos, complete episodes of the "Maggie" sitcom Erma wrote and executive produced, and video clips of Erma on "Good Morning America." More than 100,000 people visit the online museum each year.

Erma Bombeck credited the University of Dayton with preparing her for life and work, for making her believe she could write. The University of Dayton holds the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop ([www.HumorWriters.org](http://www.HumorWriters.org)) every other year to teach and encourage humor and human interest writers. The University is also assisting in the development of a 30-minute public television documentary about Erma's life. The program will be distributed nationally late in 2005.

"Erma's impact and legacy is as strong as ever," Bete said. "And the new additions to the online museum make it an even better place to take a break, remember Erma and laugh."

Visit the Erma Bombeck Online Museum at: [www.ErmaMuseum.org](http://www.ErmaMuseum.org).