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A Mother's Day Tribute

05.05.2010 | Campus and Community *CBS Sunday Morning with Charles Osgood* aired a tribute to Erma Bombeck on May 9 — Mother's Day.

Where better to illustrate Bombeck's legacy than at a writers' workshop at her alma mater in her hometown?

That's why correspondent Mo Rocca and a crew traveled to Dayton in mid-April to visit the University of Dayton's Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, interview Erma's children and granddaughter, and feature other writers, such as *New York Times*' op-ed columnist Gail Collins, *USA Today* columnist Craig Wilson and author/mom blogger Tracy Beckerman.

"After three columns and 1,800 words, Erma exploded into national syndication. Clearly, she was striking more deeply than comic relief; she was speaking to people in a profound way," Rocca told the *Dayton Daily News* to explain what inspired *Sunday Morning* to develop the feature.

Rocca may have discovered a modern-day Erma in Beckerman, a delightfully engaging and funny writer from New Jersey who was part of the 2010 workshop faculty. "I came to my first workshop in 2006. I knew nothing about nothing, but I left here so juiced," she told a roomful of writers. By the time Beckerman returned to the 2008 workshop, she had syndicated her "Lost in Suburbia" column in 50 newspapers. Today, her column appears in 400 newspapers nationally, reaching 3.5 million readers in 25 states, and she's written a book, *Rebel Without a Minivan*.

"Do I owe it all to the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop? You bet I do. And I owe it to Erma herself. Because she inspired me to believe in my writing, have the courage to pursue my dreams, realize it is much classier to take the high road, and most of all realize that being a writer is good, but being a mother is the best job in the world," she blogged.

Inspired by Bombeck's humor and humanity, humor and human-interest writers gather every other year at the University of Dayton to laugh and learn from the likes of Dave Barry, Garrison Keillor, Phil Donahue, Nancy Cartwright, Don Novello and Leonard Pitts. The event always sells out -- without a marketing brochure. It's run on a shoestring budget by staff, professors and volunteers who characterize the workshop as a labor of love. The personal involvement of the Bombeck family, which spans three generations, makes the event at her alma mater memorable and sets it apart from the myriad other writers' workshops offered nationally. April's workshop attracted more than 375 University of Dayton students and writers from around the country.

The workshop is supported, in part, by the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Endowment created by Ralph and Cindy Price Hamberg in memory of her cousin, Brother Tom Price, S.M. Price, a professor at the University of Dayton, first told Bombeck "three little words" of encouragement, "You can write."

Matthew Dewald, director of the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, at 937-229-1404.