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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## For the Love of Erma

04.08.2014 | Culture and Society, Campus and Community

For Erma Bombeck fans, Parade.com is carrying a wealth of interviews about the legendary humorist, whose writing captured the foibles of family life in a way that made us laugh at ourselves.

In an exclusive interview (url: <http://parade.condenast.com/273471/nancyberk/show-biz-analysis-w-ith-the-family-of-erma-bombeck/>), entertainment analyst Nancy Berk chats with the Bombeck family about their memories. The children recall leading a normal life — and were even a bit oblivious to their mother's growing fame as a writer. "Someone asked what she did and I said she was a syndicated communist," her son Matt remembers.

The entire interview is available on Berk's showbiz podcast, "Whine at 9 (url: <http://whineat9.com/?p=2351>) ."

What are the chances that two rising stars would live on the same block in suburban Centerville, Ohio, before hitting it big? Just days before returning to his roots to keynote the opening night of the University of Dayton's Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, TV talk show icon Phil Donahue reminisces about living across the street from the Bombecks.

"The arc of our careers pretty much coincided, although she was probably ahead of me," Donahue tells Berk for a "Showbiz Analysis" piece (url: <http://parade.condenast.com/276183/nancyberk/show-biz-analysis-w-ith-phil-donahue/>) on Parade.com. "She quickly became a phenom. Everybody wanted her. She wound up on refrigerator doors all over the world, really."

Listen to the Donahue interview on "Whine at 9 (url: <http://whineat9.com/?p=2361>) ."

The thoughts of eight of this year's faculty (url: <http://humorwriters.org/2014workshop/faculty>) at the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop are featured in another online Parade.com piece (url: <http://parade.condenast.com/277759/nancyberk/writers-and-industry-professionals-remember-erma-bombeck/>)

Author and television comedy writer Anna Lefler calls Bombeck "the godmother of domestic humor." Veteran sitcom writer and producer Bruce Ferber notes that no writer "epitomizes suburban comedy" more than Bombeck.

The first editor of *Ms.* magazine, Suzanne Braun Levine, became an Erma fan in the 1970s when the columnist campaigned for the Equal Rights Amendment. "She traveled all over the country and she did what Erma Bombeck can do that nobody else could do — which is that she diffused this controversial issue and softened people up," Levine says in the Parade.com story.

Noting that the ERA was just 24 words, Levine recalls Bombeck's memorable quip. "She delivered one of the great lines of all time (when she said) 'no 24 words have ever been so misunderstood since 'one size fits all.'"

What inspired Berk, who's on the workshop's faculty, to shine a national focus on Erma's legacy and the popular biennial workshop held by her alma mater? This year's workshop sold out in 12 hours.

"The power of this conference suggested to me the need to archive something that's incredibly special," said Berk, who's both a clinical psychologist and an author. "From her family's support in carrying her legacy forward to the people who teach at the workshop to the writers who come to learn the craft of writing, this is an unusual and tremendous effort. And its success occurs on so many levels — personal, professional and societal. Writers are inspired, and even the most seasoned professionals leave with ideas on how to develop and better showcase their talent for the world to enjoy. This conference really is the gift that keeps on giving."

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