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ERMA BOMBECK WRITING COMPETITION
PART OF CONFERENCE ON POPULAR AMERICAN HUMOR

DAYTON, Ohio — The fourth annual "Erma Bombeck Writing Competition" will be a part of the Erma Bombeck Conference on Popular American Humor to be held at the University of Dayton March 29 - April 1, 2000.

For the past three years, the writing competition has been conducted by the Washington-Centerville Public Library and Amos Suburban Newspapers. To pay special tribute to Erma Bombeck this year, the University of Dayton, Dayton Daily News and ActiveDayton.com have joined the library and the newspaper to co-sponsor the writing competition.

In addition to the writing competition, the conference will consist of a keynote address, writers' workshop, an academic symposium and the official transfer of Erma Bombeck's papers to the University.

Winners of the writing competition will be announced Wednesday, March 29, at the Washington-Centerville Public Library in a ceremony that kicks off the four-day conference. They will be honored again at a March 31 luncheon where Bombeck's papers will be presented to the University of Dayton.

The writing competition is open to more aspiring writers than ever this year. All University of Dayton alumni and residents of Montgomery, Greene, Miami, Warren and Clark counties (Ohio) are eligible to enter their previously unpublished personal essays of 450 words or less by January 15. Mail or hand deliver entries to Centerville Library, 111 W. Spring Valley Road, Centerville, Ohio 45458. Writers can also enter the competition online by accessing the official Web site — www.activedayton.com/entertainment/erma/. All entries should be typewritten or computer-generated, double spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper and submitted with an official entry form attached.

A first-, second-, and third-place winner will be chosen in each of two categories: high school students and adults. First-place entries will be published in the Dayton Daily News, Amos Suburban Newspapers and on ActiveDayton.com in March, and the authors will receive a $100 cash prize. Cash prizes will also be awarded to second- and third-place winners.
Syndicated humor columnist Art Buchwald will deliver the conference's keynote address, "Things I Cannot Tell You" at 8 p.m. on Thursday, March 30, at the University of Dayton. Admission is free and open to the public. The writers' workshop is scheduled for March 31, and the academic symposium will be held April 1.

The list of presenters for the writers' workshop includes Liz Carpenter, former press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson; Bil Keane, creator of the "Family Circus" cartoon; syndicated columnist Leonard Pitts Jr.; and many others.

Scholars from around the country will present papers on popular American humor during the academic symposium on Saturday, April 1. A concluding panel will place Bombeck's work in historical perspective.

For complete writing competition guidelines or an entry form, contact the library at (937) 433-8091. For information regarding other conference events, write erma@udayton.edu or call 1-888-UDALUMS and visit www.activedayton.com/entertainment/erma.

Bombeck credited the University of Dayton with preparing her for life and work, for making her believe she could write. She graduated in 1949 with a degree in English and never forgot that she got her start 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. She was named an honorary trustee in 1988.

The project is co-sponsored by the board of directors of UD's National Alumni Association; the public relations committee of the National Alumni Association; University Libraries; department of English; department of communication; alumni relations office; public relations office; Dayton Daily News; Amos Suburban Newspapers; Washington-Centerville Public Library; Books & Co.; ActiveDayton.com; WYSO-FM; and WHIO-TV.