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## NEWS RELEASE

### CELEBRATED WRITERS AND CARTOONISTS TO HEADLINE SPRING WRITERS' WORKSHOP HONORING ERMA BOMBECK

DAYTON, Ohio — The University of Dayton has attracted more than 20 prominent columnists, writers, cartoonists, editorial cartoonists, an agent and a syndicate representative for a spring writers' workshop to pay tribute to the life and work of Erma Bombeck.

Part of UD's sesquicentennial celebration, the writers' workshop is one feature of the four-day Erma Bombeck Conference on Popular American Humor to be held at the University of Dayton March 29-April 1, 2000.

Syndicated columnist Art Buchwald will deliver the conference's keynote address, "Things I Cannot Tell You," at 8 p.m. on Thursday, March 30. It's free and open to the public. The writers' workshop on Friday, March 31 will draw writers, students and others interested in humor and human-interest writing. There will be a fee of \$75 for workshop participants. Some complimentary registrations will be available for UD students.

Buchwald, author Liz Carpenter and cartoonist Bil Keane ("Family Circus") — all close friends of Erma's — will take part in the workshop. In addition, Bombeck's New York literary agent, Aaron Priest, and son, Matt, a television feature film writer, will offer sessions. The sessions will play off titles from some of Bombeck's most popular books, such as "The Grass is Always Greener: How to Become Syndicated;" "At Wit's End: Writing the Human Interest Column;" "What Am I Doing in the Pits: Finding Humor in Everyday Life;" and "The Second Oldest Profession: So You Want to be a Cartoonist."

The list of confirmed presenters for the writers' workshop includes:

- Columnists Susan Ager of the *Detroit Free Press*; Mary McCarty and D.L. Stewart of the *Dayton Daily News*; Leonard Pitts Jr. of the *Miami Herald*; Laura Pulfer of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*; Sarah Rickman of the *Centerville-Bellbrook Times*; P. S. Wall of the Ballantine Publishing Group; Joe Weasel of Scripps Howard News Service; and Craig Wilson of *USA Today*;
- Cartoonists Robb Armstrong ("Jump Start"); Tom Batiuk ("Funky Winkerbean" and "Crankshaft"); and Tony Cochran ("Agnes");

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- Editorial cartoonists Chip Bok of the *Akron Beacon Journal*; Frank Cammuso of the *Herald-Journal* and *Post-Standard* in Syracuse, N.Y.; David Catrow of the *Springfield News-Sun*; and Jeff Darcy of the *Plain Dealer* in Cleveland;
- Author Michael Rosen, literary director of the Thurber House; freelance writer Bonnie Abbott of Columbus, Ohio; Melvin Helitzer, journalism professor at Ohio University and author of five books including *Comedy Writing Secrets* from Writers' Digest Books; and Lee Salem, editorial director at Universal Press Syndicate.

Rosen is editor of *Mirth of a Nation*, to be published by HarperCollins in March. The 425-page paperback book — the first in a series of biennial treasuries of American humor — *Mirth of A Nation* will include articles by more than 50 celebrated contemporary authors.

Besides the workshop, there will be a number of ways for people to interact with the writers. Online chats will be conducted by ActiveDayton.com on the conference's Web site, [www.activedayton.com/entertainment/erma](http://www.activedayton.com/entertainment/erma). Books & Co. will hold book signings, and several of the writers and cartoonists will speak to UD classes during their visit.

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

For three decades, 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 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, and 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.

For information, e-mail [erma@udayton.edu](mailto:erma@udayton.edu) or call 1-888-UDALUMS or UD's public relations office at (937) 229-3241. Visit [www.activedayton.com/entertainment/erma](http://www.activedayton.com/entertainment/erma).