

University of Dayton

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Documents from the Erma Bombeck Writers'  
Workshop

College of Arts and Sciences

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10-20-2022

## 2022 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Program

Teri Rizvi

University of Dayton

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**Seize the moment.** Remember all those women on the Titanic who waved off the dessert cart. **Marriage has no guarantees.** If that's what you're looking for, go live with a car battery. **When your mother asks,** "Do you want a piece of advice?" it is a mere formality. It doesn't matter if you answer yes or no. You're going to get it anyway. **I had been hiding** my hopes and dreams in the back of my mind. It was the only safe place in the house. **My theory on housework** is, if the item doesn't multiply, smell, catch on fire or block the refrigerator door, let it be. No one cares. Why should you? **It takes a lot of courage** to show your dreams to someone else. **There is nothing more** miserable in the world than to arrive in paradise and look like your passport photo. **He who laughs ...** lasts. **Never go** to your high school reunion. You will think that's all you have done since graduation. **When you bowl** of cherries, what was I doing in the pit? **When you and** I have advocated separate vacations, you're not leaving us. **In her infinite wisdom,** my mother told me not to leave when you hit menopause. It'll take your mind off your problems. **Have** **dieted** continuously for the last two years. I lost 758 pounds. By all calculations, I know I should have a farm bracelet. **Whenever a group** of women get together, they always



# ERMA BOMBECK

*Erma*

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W r i t e r s ' W o r k s h o p

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON  
Oct. 20-22, 2022

“You  
can  
write!”

Three little words  
from  
English professor  
Brother Tom Price  
that  
changed  
my  
life.

**ERMA BOMBECK**

## About the workshop



**H**umorist Erma Bombeck is one of America's most celebrated writers. For those who grew up with Erma's columns hanging on our refrigerator doors, we always felt as though she could be our next-door neighbor. Her writing captured the foibles of family life in a way that made us laugh at ourselves.

The University of Dayton held the first Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop in 2000 as a one-time event to commemorate the Bombeck family's gift of Erma's papers to her alma mater.

We thought a writers' workshop in Erma's name would be an outstanding tribute to her legacy. Erma's famous friends — columnist Art Buchwald, *Family Circus* cartoonist Bil Keane and author and ERA advocate Liz Carpenter — headlined the event. It proved to be so popular (and so much fun) that we decided to offer it again.

The rest is history. Today, writers inspired by Erma's humor and humanity gather every other year to laugh and learn from the likes of Dave Barry, Phil Donahue, Nancy Cartwright, Don Novello, Leonard Pitts, Gail Collins, Alan Zweibel, Liza Donnelly and Lisa Scottoline. The popular workshop draws new and established writers from around the nation and beyond. It is the only workshop in the country devoted to both humor and human interest writing.

The personal involvement of the Bombeck family makes the event memorable and sets it apart from myriad other writers' workshops.

The workshop is a labor of love for its part-time staff and volunteers. The University of Dayton Alumni Association underwrites the cost of scholarships that allow University students to attend for free. In 2004, University of Dayton



alumnus Ralph Hamberg and his wife, Cindy, gave a \$100,000 gift to start a workshop endowment fund in memory of Cindy's cousin — Brother Tom Price, S.M. This University of Dayton English professor first told Erma “three little words” of encouragement: “You can write.”

The Hamberg family, the Bombeck family and other supporters continue to contribute to the endowment fund, which allows the University of Dayton to keep the workshop affordable.

This effort to honor Erma's legacy goes beyond the writers' workshop. The University of Dayton is now the official repository for her prolific volume of work, including 4,000 original columns and manuscripts, notes, speeches, articles, correspondence and memorabilia.

In addition, the workshop offers virtual programs and has spawned a blog ([go.udayton.edu/erma](http://go.udayton.edu/erma)); a documentary

produced by ThinkTV and distributed nationally through American Public Television; an international writing competition co-hosted by the Washington-Centerville Public Library; a humorist-in-residence program; two humor anthologies; awards for writers with financial need; an Ohio historical marker on campus; a monthly e-newsletter; and an active social media presence, including a private Facebook page for attendees. In 2010, *CBS Sunday Morning* with Charles Osgood aired a Mother's Day tribute to Erma, using the workshop as a backdrop for the piece.

Our mission is simple: to encourage and inspire writers in the same way Erma found encouragement and inspiration at the University of Dayton.

Our mantra is timeless: “You can write!”

Welcome to the University of Dayton's Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop.

## A warm welcome

**W**elcome to the 2022 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop! This is our first in-person workshop in four years, and we're thrilled to bring this supportive writing community back together again.

In response to a survey of attendees, we have created more workshops in the craft of writing and the use of new media to market your work. Some workshops are tailored for writers of all levels of experience. Others are geared to more advanced writers. Six sessions will be offered during most time slots. Simply choose which ones you want to attend. Most sessions will be offered twice.

We've included optional "nuts-and-bolts" workshops for early risers. Feel free to grab a cup of coffee and a bagel and learn more about marketing, publishing and the business side of writing. We've also carved out some time for attendees to take an "Erma Road Trip," culminating in a preview exhibit of the Erma Bombeck Collection in the University of Dayton's Roesch Library.

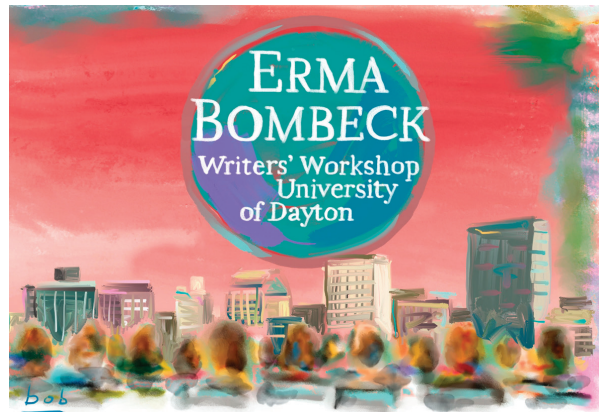
Some features:

■ Stand-up comedian and author Leighann Lord will emcee with a blend of grace and hilarity. A workshop favorite, she's been seen most recently on Showtime in *Funny Women of a Certain Age*.

■ We will honor the winners of A Hotel Room of One's Own: The Erma Bombeck | Anna Lefler Humorist-in-Residence Program and the Erma Bombeck Writing Competition. In all, nearly 900 writers entered these two competitions. More than

90 established writers served as volunteer judges, with the finalist entries judged by Nancy Cartwright, Mike Reiss, Susan Pohlman and Max Pross.

■ Dozens of brave, funny writers signed up to perform at the popular Attendee Stand-Up Comedy Night. Celebrity judges selected three performers from the virtual "Erma's Got Talent" auditions, and



we randomly picked another dozen. Comedian Wendy Liebman will choose three more from the hilarious writers she meets in her stand-up comedy boot camp. Liebman's boot camp is open to anyone who wants to learn writing techniques to make their stories funnier — not just those interested in performing on Saturday night.

At the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, you will discover inspiring faculty who are approachable and encouraging. You will laugh and learn in an atmosphere that's supportive to writers of all levels.

Most importantly, you will hear the words Erma first heard at the University of Dayton: "You can write!"

t's a fitting final chapter.

The original manuscripts, columns, handwritten notes, speeches, articles and memorabilia of the late Erma Bombeck, one of the great American humorists of the 20th century, are now being housed at the University of Dayton, where she graduated in 1949.

This is where Bombeck first heard “three magic words” from her English professor, Brother Tom Price, S.M.: “You can write!” That encouragement catapulted a career that encompassed more than 4,500 syndicated columns about the foibles of family life and a dozen books, including nine on *The New York*

*Times* bestseller list. *Forever, Erma*, published after her 1996 death, also cracked the coveted list.

“The collection is completely irreplaceable,” said Ed Hoffman, a rare-book collector in Columbus, Ohio, who specializes in Americana, especially Ohioana. “The fact that Erma and her husband and then her family were able to retain and safeguard so much of the

output from her working life and see that it will live on at the University of Dayton is a wonderful labor of love.”

In words tapped out on a typewriter more than half a century ago, Bombeck made everyday life her beat. Through her comical columns and books, she made us look at the absurdities of family life with fresh perspective — and laugh at ourselves. When she exposed the myth of motherhood, her

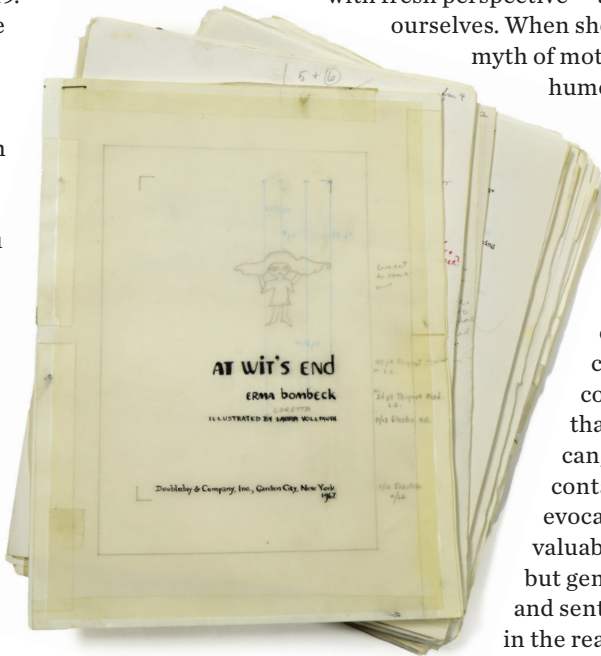
humor was never cruel. She

wrote as though we were all in on the joke.

“Her finely tuned columns, carefully constructed so that each reader can, and will, smile, contain not only evocative stories and valuable messages but gem-like phrases and sentences that last in the reader’s memory and serve as touchstones

that can be revisited like an old friend,” wrote Lee Salem, editorial director for Universal Press Syndicate, when he nominated Bombeck for a Pulitzer Prize in 1991.

Housed on the campus she loved, Bombeck’s body of work will remain that touchstone — one that can be revisited like an old friend time and again. Her gift of humor transcends time.



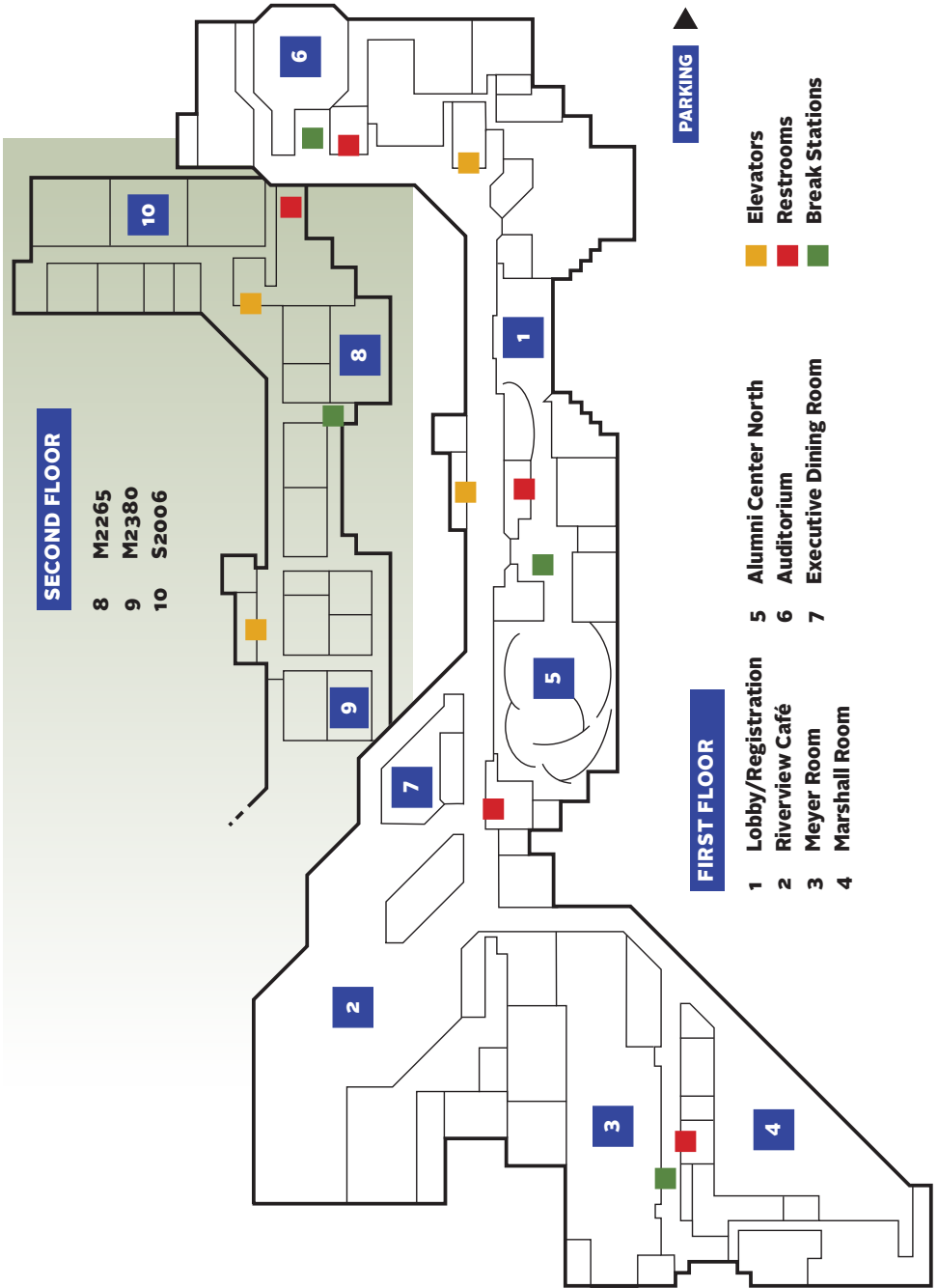


*The Erma Bombeck Collection is available for viewing by scholars of popular American humor and feminist studies, as well as the public, by appointment.*

*Email [archives@udayton.edu](mailto:archives@udayton.edu).*



# Map of Daniel J. Curran Place



## Pre-workshop events

- March 23      **Erma Bombeck Writing Competition Awards Ceremony (virtual)**  
Sponsored by the Washington-Centerville Public Library.  
Featured Kathy Kinney and Cindy Ratzlaff of *Queen of Your Own Life*.
- May 3      **Erma's Got Talent: The Stand-Up Auditions (virtual)**  
Hosted by Nancy Berk with celebrity judges Brian Kiley, Wendy Liebman and Joel Madison.
- Sept. 28      **Pitchapalooza! (virtual)**  
Hosted by Arielle Eckstut and David Henry Sterry, the Book Doctors

## Thursday, Oct. 20

- 2–5:30 p.m.      Attendee sign-in  
Marriott at the University of Dayton (lobby)
- 4–6 p.m.      Networking reception  
Marriott at the University of Dayton (Tradewinds and outdoor courtyard, weather permitting; cash bar)
- 4–9 p.m.      EBWW bookstore open  
Marriott at the University of Dayton (Tradewinds)
- 6 p.m.      **Welcome dinner with keynote Cathy Guisewite**  
Marriott at the University of Dayton (ballroom)
- Dinner program includes the ceremonial robing of four winners of A Hotel Room of One's Own: Erma Bombeck|Anna Lefler Humorist-in-Residence Program.*
- 8 p.m.      **Book signing with Cathy Guisewite**  
Marriott at the University of Dayton (Tradewinds)



**Guest WiFi access** is available at Daniel J. Curran Place via UDconnect. Select the UDconnect WiFi network and follow the prompts to self-register for guest WiFi access when on campus.

7:15–8:30 a.m. (loop) Shuttle bus from Marriott at the University of Dayton to Daniel J. Curran Place

7:30–9 a.m. Attendee sign-in (lobby of Daniel J. Curran Place)  
Continental breakfast (Riverview Café)

7:45–8:45 a.m. **Nuts and Bolts**  
Optional pre-workshop sessions (for early risers!)  
These sessions also offered on Saturday at 7:45 a.m.

**Publishing 101 — David Braugher**

Marshall Room

**Yes, You're Running a Business — Lori B. Duff**

Meyer Room

**Launching and Marketing Your Book — Elysse Wagner**

Alumni Center North

9–10:15 a.m. — **Six concurrent sessions (choose one)**

**Good Naked: Wit, Wisdom and a Writing Workshop — Joni B. Cole**

Marshall Room

This session also offered Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

**Is There a Secret to Writing Funny? — Alan Zweibel**

M2265

This session also offered Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

**Ask the Agents — Panel featuring Wayne Arthurson, Margaret Danko and Naomi Eisenbeiss, moderated by Lian Dolan**

M2380

This session also offered Saturday at 9 a.m.

**Not Having a Podcast in 2022 Is Like Not Having a Fax Machine in 1987 — Dave Jackson (one time only)**

Alumni Center North

**The Power of STORY — Julie Cantrell**

Meyer Room

This session also offered Saturday at 2 p.m.

**The Birds and the Bees of Being an Author: (Mostly Undiscussed) Advice for New Writers — Eva Lesko Natiello (one time only)**

Auditorium

Break

# Friday, Oct. 21

10:35–11:50 a.m. — **Six concurrent sessions (choose one)**

## **Adapting Your Story or Novel into Television or Film**

— **Adriana Trigiani** (*one time only*)

M2265

## **Reflection and Takeaway: The Heart and Soul of Memoir — Brooke Warner**

Auditorium

This session also offered Friday at 3:35 p.m.

## **When Humor Goes, There Goes Civilization: How to Use Your Gifts to Change the World (and Have a Laugh Along the Way) —**

**Karen Walrond**

Marshall Room

This session also offered Friday at 2 p.m.

## **Erma Would KILL on TikTok: A Writer's Guide to Social Media Videos — Rebecca Regnier**

M2380

This session also offered Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

## **Turn Problems into Punchlines — Judy Carter**

Alumni Center North

This session also offered Saturday at 2 p.m.

## **How to Plot Your Book with Ease — Ann Garvin**

Meyer Room

This session also offered Saturday at 2 p.m.

Noon to 1:45 p.m.

## **Lunch and photos with keynote Dion Flynn**

Riverview Café

Break

2–3:15 p.m. — **Six concurrent sessions (choose one)**

## **How to Tell Your Story — Margot Leitman**

Marshall Room

This session also offered Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

## **Songwriting: The Healing Power of Music — Kellie Haddock**

M2380

This session also offered Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

**Fear Not the Blank Page! — Susan Pohlman**

Meyer Room

This session also offered Saturday at 9 a.m.

**How to Uncover Your Own Voice and Get It Down on Paper —  
Kathy Kinney and Cindy Ratzlaff**

Alumni Center North

This session also offered Saturday at 2 p.m.

**When Humor Goes, There Goes Civilization: How to Use Your Gifts  
to Change the World (and Have a Laugh Along the Way) —  
Karen Walrond**

Auditorium

This session also offered Friday at 10:35 a.m.

**Stand-Up Comedy Boot Camp — Wendy Liebman** *(one time only)*

M2265

Break

3:35–4:50 p.m. — **Six concurrent sessions (choose one)**

**Improvisor's Mindset — Dion Flynn** *(one time only)*

Meyer Room

**Reflection and Takeaway: The Heart and Soul of Memoir —  
Brooke Warner**

Auditorium

This session also offered Friday at 10:35 a.m.

**Newsflash: Newsletters Work! — James Breakwell**

S2006

This session also offered Saturday at 9 a.m.

**Form Is Funny: [Insert Your Own Funny Subtitle Here] —  
Julie Schumacher**

Marshall Room

This session also offered Saturday at 9 a.m.

**The Art & Business of Author Platform —**

**Jane Friedman** *(one time only)*

M2265

**Finding the Funny in Your Story — Annabelle Gurwitch**

Alumni Center North

This session also offered Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

# Friday, Oct. 21

3:30–5:30 p.m. (loop) Shuttle buses to Marriott at the University of Dayton

5–11 p.m. EBWW bookstore open  
Marriott at the University of Dayton (Tradewinds)

6 p.m. **Dinner with keynotes W. Bruce Cameron and Cathryn Michon in conversation with Adriana Trigiani**

Marriott at the University of Dayton (ballroom)

*Dinner program includes recognition of the winners of the Erma Bombeck Writing Competition.*

8:30–10 p.m. **Book signing with W. Bruce Cameron, Cathryn Michon and Adriana Trigiani**

**Book signing with all workshop presenters**

Marriott at the University of Dayton (Tradewinds; cash bar)

7:15–8:30 a.m. (loop) Shuttle bus from Marriott at the University of Dayton to Daniel J. Curran Place  
Continental breakfast (Riverview Café)

7:45 to 8:45 a.m.

**Nuts and Bolts**

Optional pre-workshop sessions (for early risers!)  
These sessions also offered on Friday at 7:45 a.m.

**Publishing 101 — David Braughler**

Marshall Room

**Yes, You're Running a Business — Lori B. Duff**

Meyer Room

**Launching and Marketing Your Book — Elysse Wagner**

Alumni Center North

9–10:15 a.m. — **Six concurrent sessions (choose one)**

**Form Is Funny: [Insert Your Own Funny Subtitle Here] — Julie Schumacher**

Alumni Center North

This session also offered Friday at 3:35 p.m.

**Newsflash: Newsletters Work! — James Breakwell**

M2265

This session also offered Friday at 3:35 p.m.

**So You Wanna Start a Podcast: Hosts and Producers Weigh In — Panel moderated by Lian Dolan, featuring Dave Jackson, Joni B. Cole and Annabelle Gurwitch (one time only)**

Auditorium

**Fear Not the Blank Page! — Susan Pohlman**

S2006

This session also offered Friday at 2 p.m.

**Marketing Is Not a Four-Letter Word: Find Your Readers and Increase Sales — Eva Lesko Natiello (one time only)**

Marshall Room

**Ask the Agents — Panel featuring Wayne Arthurson, Margaret Danko and Naomi Eisenbeiss, moderated by Katrina Kittle**

Meyer Room

This session also offered Friday at 9 a.m.

Break

# Saturday, Oct. 22

10:35–11:50 a.m. — **Six concurrent sessions (choose one)**

**Finding the Funny in Your Story — Annabelle Gurwitch**

Auditorium

This session also offered Friday at 3:35 p.m.

**Good Naked: Wit, Wisdom and a Writing Workshop — Joni B. Cole**

Meyer Room

This session also offered Friday at 9 a.m.

**Songwriting: The Healing Power of Music — Kellie Haddock**

M2265

This session also offered Friday at 2 p.m.

**Erma Would KILL on TikTok: A Writer's Guide to Social Media Videos — Rebecca Regnier**

S2006

This session also offered Friday at 10:35 a.m.

**Is There a Secret to Writing Funny? — Alan Zweibel**

Marshall Room

This session also offered Friday at 9 a.m.

**How to Tell Your Story — Margot Leitman**

Alumni Center North

This session also offered Friday at 2 p.m.

Break

Noon–1:30 p.m.

**Lunch with keynote Katrina Kittle**

Riverview Café

*Lunch program includes the awarding of Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop scholarships to University of Dayton students, funded by attendee donations.*

1:30–2 p.m.

**Break and book signing with Katrina Kittle**

2–3:15 p.m. — **Six concurrent sessions (choose one)**

**How to Uncover Your Own Voice and Get It Down on Paper — Kathy Kinney and Cindy Ratzlaff**

Alumni Center North

This session also offered Friday at 2 p.m.

**Your Author Website: Mistakes You're Making and How to Fix Them — Jane Friedman (one time only)**

Marshall Room



**The Power of STORY — Julie Cantrell**

Meyer Room

This session also offered Friday at 9 a.m.

**Turn Problems into Punchlines — Judy Carter**

S2006

This session also offered Friday at 10:35 a.m.

**How to Plot Your Book with Ease — Ann Garvin**

M2265

This session also offered Friday at 10:35 a.m.

**Writing + Speaking = Bestseller — Lian Dolan** (*one time only*)

Auditorium

Break

Attendee free time, with optional activities

3:30–5:30 p.m.

Shuttle bus to Marriott at the University of Dayton (loop)

3:30 p.m.

Attendee Stand-Up Comedy Night rehearsal with **Wendy Liebman** and stand-up comics  
Kiefaber Room, University of Dayton Marriott

**Erma Road Trip**, featuring a drive down Erma Bombeck Way to Woodland Cemetery to visit gravesite, followed by photo opportunities at the Erma Bombeck historical marker and commemorative tree outside St. Mary's Hall on the University of Dayton campus, concluding with a sneak peek of the Erma Bombeck Collection in the Stuart and Mimi Rose Gallery on the first floor of Roesch Library. Shuttle bus tours available. Attendees with cars are encouraged to carpool.

5–9:30 p.m.

**EBWW bookstore open**

Marriott at the University of Dayton (Tradewinds)

6:30 p.m.

**Dinner with keynote Laraine Newman**

Marriott at the University of Dayton (ballroom)

*Dinner program includes recognition of DC Stanfa Memorial Writers' Award recipients.*

8:30 p.m.

**Photos with Laraine Newman**

Marriott at the University of Dayton (ballroom)

8:30–9:30 p.m.

**Photo booth** (share your photos on social media!)

Marriott at the University of Dayton (Tradewinds; cash bar)

9:30–11 p.m.

**Attendee Stand-Up Comedy Night with host Wendy Liebman**

Marriott at the University of Dayton (ballroom)

## Special features

### **Erma Bombeck Writing Competition Awards Ceremony** (Virtual)

Took place at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 23  
Featured keynote speakers **Kathy Kinney** and **Cindy Ratzlaff**, authors of *Queen of Your Own Life* and hosts of the popular website of the same name. Sponsored by the Washington-Centerville Public Library.

### **Erma's Got Talent: The Stand-Up Auditions** (Virtual)

Took place at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 3  
Hosted by **Nancy Berk** with celebrity judges **Brian Kiley**, **Wendy Liebman** and **Joel Madison**. Contestants tested their two-minute stand-up routines before an EBWW audience and three stand-up veterans armed with insight and constructive criticism. Selected participants from these auditions will perform in the Saturday night show lineup. The remainder were chosen randomly or through the Stand-Up Comedy Boot Camp.

### **Pitchapalooza: 'American Idol' for Books** (Virtual)

Took place at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 28  
**Arielle Eckstut** and **David Henry Sterry**  
A workshop favorite! Pitchapalooza is *American Idol* for books — only kinder and gentler. Twenty writers were selected at random to give a one-minute pitch. At these events, Arielle Eckstut and David Henry Sterry, known as the Book Doctors, critique ideas, style, potential in the marketplace and much more, giving authors concrete advice and a greater understanding of the publishing industry. From Los Angeles to Hawaii to New York City and many stops along the way, Pitchapalooza draws standing-room-only crowds, press and blog coverage and the kind of bookstore buzz reserved for celebrity authors. The winner receives an introduction to an agent or publisher appropriate for their book.

### **Book Signings**

Book signings with keynoters follow their talks, and a book signing with all workshop presenters — including for the EBWW book *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter* — will run from 8:30 to 10 p.m. Friday, Oct. 21.

### **Erma Road Trip**

3:30-5:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 22  
Take a drive down Erma Bombeck Way to Woodland Cemetery to visit Erma Bombeck's gravesite, followed by photo opportunities at the Erma Bombeck historical marker and commemorative tree outside St. Mary's Hall on the University of Dayton campus, concluding with a sneak peek of the Erma Bombeck Collection in the Stuart and Mimi Rose Gallery on the first floor of Roesch Library. Shuttle bus tours available. Attendees with cars are encouraged to carpool.

### **Attendee Stand-Up Comedy Night**

9:30-11 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 22  
Hosted by **Wendy Liebman**  
Stand-up comic Wendy Liebman returns to emcee the traditional Attendee Stand-Up Comedy Night, featuring 18 attendees. Some comics were selected at the pre-workshop event after performing before a panel of celebrity judges. Others were chosen randomly after the auditions. Liebman will have chosen another three from her Stand-Up Comedy Boot Camp workshop.

**Nuts and Bolts** (optional — for early risers!) 7:45–8:45 a.m. Friday, Oct. 21, and Saturday, Oct. 22

### **Publishing 101**

#### **David Braugher**

What's the right publishing path for your book? Struggling to understand the difference between traditional, hybrid publishing and do-it-yourself self-publishing? Grab a cup of coffee and a bagel and learn about the essentials of editing, cover design, formatting, ISBNs, copyright, marketing, and retail and library distribution. You'll leave knowing the questions you should be asking yourself before you publish your book.

### **Launching and Marketing Your Book**

#### **Elysse Wagner**

Approximately 3,000 books are published on average every day. How do you creatively market your book in such a crowded marketplace? In a changing publishing industry, it's imperative to keep up with digital and social media promotional strategies. Learn from campaign strategist and publicist Elysse Wagner about the various ways to promote your book, whether you're an indie author or a traditionally published one.

### **Yes, You're Running a Business**

#### **Lori B. Duff**

Licenses? Contracts? Accounting? Estate planning? What does any of that have to do with the art of writing? A lot! Maybe everything. Judge Lori B. Duff will explain what you need to know to keep your writing business on the right side of the law. From navigating contract legalese, deciding whether to incorporate, managing business expenses, even considering what happens to your work after you're gone, Duff will educate in an entertaining, understandable way. There's a reason she was awarded the title "Atlanta's Funniest Lawyer" in 2018.

# Concurrent workshop sessions



## CRAFT OF WRITING

### Reflection and Takeaway: The Heart and Soul of Memoir

**Brooke Warner**

Memoir is more than just a story of what happened to you. Its heart and soul lies in two elements of craft that every memoirist needs to have a firm handle on: reflection and takeaway. Most beginning memoirists are so focused on the plot of their story that they forget that readers love memoir for what it says about the human condition, for its capacity to help us understand something about the world we live in or about ourselves. Reflection requires you to stop your narrative and answer the question, “What sense do I make of this part of my story?” Takeaway asks you write about your thoughts and impressions on your subject matter, to delve deeper into your experience and your message and to be a wise voice for your reader. In this session, Brooke Warner, publisher of She Writes Press and author of three books on memoir, will show you exactly how to implement this kind of writing into your memoir, complete with examples from published works. You’ll leave knowing how to tap into the heart of your memoir and to connect with your reader on a whole new level.

■ Offered Friday at 10:35 a.m. and 3:35 p.m.

### Songwriting: The Healing Power of Music

**Kellie Haddock**

Singer/songwriter Kellie Haddock has lived through tragedy and found hope and joy on the other side. In her workshop, she will invite writers into the behind-the-scenes experience of crafting a song and help them find their own writer’s voice as they explore song structure and lyrics. As part of the workshop, she’ll perform original music, written from the heart, that speaks to love, compassion and hope.

■ Offered Friday at 2 p.m. and Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

### Fear Not the Blank Page!

**Susan Pohlman**

Erma Bombeck was a master at mining her life for meaningful and relatable material. This interactive workshop will explore how to sift through our own lives for stories and anecdotes that can be crafted into essays and short stories. We all sit on a treasure chest of material; the secret lies in knowing where to dig. Come ready to write and have fun!

■ Offered Friday at 2 p.m. and Saturday at 9 a.m.

### How to Plot Your Book with Ease

**Ann Garvin**

What’s the biggest mistake writers make? They have difficulty merging the technical aspects of plot with the desire of the character at the helm. Without these things working together, authors get rejected. The job of a writer is to entice, compel and seduce readers — to tell a story while entertaining and evoking real feelings. Emotion and scene are the secret weapons of plot and creating a truly compelling story. In this workshop, participants will be taken step by step from idea to emotion to story. Participants will understand plot and never get stuck in the mushy middle again.

■ Offered Friday at 10:35 a.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

### The Power of STORY

**Julie Cantrell**

If you have ever read a book and thought, “I wonder if I could write a story,” Julie Cantrell is here to tell you, “Yes, you can!” Whether you’ve already finished a manuscript or you’re just beginning to brew some ideas, Cantrell will help you understand the basic building blocks of

## Concurrent workshop sessions

narrative structure, discuss the secret ingredient that keeps the pages turning and offer prompts to help you bring your words to the page. Come ready to write and to celebrate the power of story!

■ Offered Friday at 9 a.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

### Good Naked: Wit, Wisdom and a Writing Workshop

Joni B. Cole

Don't worry — there will be no shedding of clothes — but this lively, interactive session will expose the creative process in all its glory. Together, we'll discover practical ways to skirt self-doubt, mine meaningful material and make the most of the creative process from your first draft through your final revision. Come prepared to write in response to a guided prompt and share aloud your efforts for insights and appreciation. Bring something to write on and leave self-doubt at the door.

■ Offered Friday at 9 a.m. and Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

### How to Uncover Your Own Voice and Get It Down on Paper

Kathy Kinney and Cindy Ratzlaff

Using a series of improvisational writing techniques and a simple kitchen timer, this hands-on workshop will get you past your self-criticism, reveal your unique voice and help you incorporate that voice into your writing. You'll learn how to use your voice to paint a clear picture for readers, helping them experience who you are, where you are, who you are to the others in your scene and what makes this day so important in the story. Come prepared to write without self-editing and to give your imagination a good workout.

■ Offered Friday at 2 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

### Adapting Your Story or Novel into Television or Film

Adriana Trigiani

Bring your work from book to screen. Do you think your story has potential to come to life? Learn the steps of adapting your art into television or film. You have your writing; now turn it into screenwriting. You will learn both the business and the art of adaptation and have access to creators who've mastered this themselves.

■ Offered Friday at 10:35 a.m.

## ⇒ HUMOR WRITING

### Form Is Funny: [Insert Your Own Funny Subtitle Here]

Julie Schumacher

Here's a way to combat the terror of the blank page or screen: rather than beginning a story or essay or memoir by concentrating on subject matter, try starting with a shape or a form. We'll experiment with options, turning that minefield of a family gathering into a board game or describing that climb up the corporate ladder in terms of a never-ending to-do list. Bring material from your real life or your imagination and get ready to have fun with form.

■ Offered Friday at 3:35 p.m. and Saturday at 9 a.m.

### Finding the Funny in Your Story

Annabelle Gurwitch

*New York Times* bestselling author, Thurber Prize finalist and humorist Annabelle Gurwitch leads this creative brainstorming session on current project ideas and works in progress. She'll share her process of cultivating humor in even the most serious subjects and work with writers on finding opportunities in a piece of writing they send in advance. You'll learn a process you can apply each time you sit down to write. This workshop combines short lectures, writing,

## Concurrent workshop sessions

reading short excerpts of their work (unless a writer prefers not to), discussion of craft and brainstorming.

■ Offered Friday at 3:35 p.m. and Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

### When Humor Goes, There Goes Civilization: How to Use Your Gifts to Change the World (and Have a Laugh Along the Way)

**Karen Walrond**

So writing and humor are your superpowers — but can they change the world? Join Karen Walrond, author of *The Lightmaker's Manifesto: How to Work for Change Without Losing Your Joy*, to learn how your gifts of expression and perspective can not only be catalysts for change, but even be the keys to shifting mindsets while creating joy — for others and yourself.

■ Offered Friday at 10:35 a.m. and 2 p.m.

### Turn Problems into Punchlines

**Judy Carter**

Bring in your breakups, heartache and character flaws, and Judy Carter, author of *The New Comedy Bible*, will help you turn those into comedy gold for stand-up performances or funny essays and stories. What will you learn?

- How to develop strong openings that make them love you in 17 seconds.
- How to write comparison and dialogue and mix in jokes.
- Create comedy material from your life experiences.
- Turn the crazy characters in your family into material.
- Get an instant connection with any audience.

■ Offered Friday at 10:35 a.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

### How to Tell Your Story

**Margot Leitman**

In this interactive workshop, you'll learn from a master how to turn painful, strange or even mundane life experiences into performable funny stories. Dig inside your own life to find humorous, relatable material that unifies an audience, making them laugh at their own experiences through your performance. You will leave with a strong direction of how to structure a live story while thinking, "I can't believe I told a room full of strangers about that — and I can't believe they all laughed!"

■ Offered Friday at 2 p.m. and Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

### Is There a Secret to Writing Funny?

**Alan Zweibel**

Erma Bombeck wrote, "There is a thin line that separates laughter and pain, comedy and tragedy, humor and hurt." Great humor writers — from Mark Twain to Tina Fey — have been adept at straddling those thin lines. Learn how to write funnier from one of the funniest writers in the country. Tapping into his wealth of experience as a television writer, screenwriter, playwright and novelist, Alan Zweibel will offer his secrets for writing humorous essays, sketches, stand-up routines, blogs and novels.

■ Offered Friday at 9 a.m. and Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

### Improvisor's Mindset

**Dion Flynn**

Want to add more creativity and confidence to your life? The basic tools of improv are the basic tools of human relationship. In this interactive workshop, Dion Flynn will show you how to develop an improviser's mindset that will prepare you to move through the unknown without a script and thrive. Described as the Dave Chapelle of applied improvisation, Flynn uses insightful humor to share innovative ways to connect.

■ Offered Friday at 3:35 p.m.

## Concurrent workshop sessions

### Stand-Up Comedy Boot Camp

**Wendy Liebman**

Stand-up comic Wendy Liebman will share writing techniques to make your stories funnier — and ways to deliver them to get a laugh. The workshop is open to stand-up performers and anyone who wants to learn the techniques for writing and performing stand-up comedy. Scribble down your own hilarious ideas and come prepared to laugh. While most performers for Stand-Up Comedy Night will be selected in advance, Liebman will choose an additional three from the writers she meets in the workshop.

■ Offered Friday at 2 p.m.

### ⇒ PUBLISHING

#### Ask the Agents

**Wayne Arthurson, Margaret Danko and Naomi Eisenbeiss**

This Q&A with a panel of agents provides you with an opportunity to find out what agents look for in sample chapters, what makes them stop reading, what they can do for self-published authors and what they want to hear during a live pitch. You'll get the chance to ask the agents about any topic, from platform and marketing to self-publishing and series writing.

■ Offered Friday at 9 a.m. and Saturday at 9 a.m. (moderated by Lian Dolan on Friday and Katrina Kittle on Saturday)

#### The Birds and the Bees of Being an Author: (Mostly Undiscussed) Advice for New Writers

**Eva Lesko Natiello**

This presentation is a supportive-big-sister session for new writers. Eva Lesko Natiello talks about topics that new writers wonder about but are afraid to ask or don't know who to ask.

Topics include how to start, writer's block, getting feedback, waning enthusiasm, self-doubt ("What if this is horrible?"), finding community, ego, bad reviews, how to forge ahead when insecurity strikes — and more.

■ Offered Friday at 9 a.m.

### ⇒ MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

#### Not Having a Podcast in 2022 Is Like Not Having a Fax Machine in 1987

**Dave Jackson**

What does it take to start a podcast? How much does it cost? What are the benefits? Hear amazing stories of listener loyalty that have sent books up the Amazon charts. You already have the skills to be a podcaster; you just don't know it.

■ Offered Friday at 9 a.m.

#### Erma Would KILL on TikTok — A Writer's Guide to Social Media Videos

**Rebecca Regnier**

Rebecca Regnier's videos on TikTok and Facebook have racked up millions of views. Regnier will break down how she uses social media to connect to new readers for her books and columns. You'll also learn about BookTok, where voracious readers are discovering new authors every day. From TikTok to Instagram reels to YouTube shorts, you'll see examples of how to turn your columns into videos and use your videos to build an audience for your work.

■ Offered Friday at 10:35 a.m. and Saturday at 10:35 a.m.

# Concurrent workshop sessions

## Newsflash: Newsletters Work!

**James Breakwell**

There are many, many ways to sell books. They all suck. Well, almost all of them. If you actually want to move copies, build an audience and generate income, you need a newsletter. Yes, the art of the mass email is alive and well. Unfortunately, most people screw it up. James Breakwell will show you a way that works. After building up huge and mostly useless audiences on social media, he finally mastered newsletters — the one consistent way to achieve real-world results. He learned everything the hard way, and he has the scars to prove it (they're mostly emotional scars, but trust us — they're there). The future isn't TikTok; it's the inbox.

■ Offered Friday at 3:35 p.m. and Saturday at 9 a.m.

## So You Wanna Start a Podcast: Hosts and Producers Weigh In

**Moderated by Lian Dolan and featuring Dave Jackson, Joni B. Cole and Annabelle Gurwitch**

These days it seems like everyone has a podcast, from top celebrities to your barista. How hard could it be to conceive, launch and sustain a successful podcast? If you're thinking that you want to turn your written material into a podcast, this is the session for you. Successful podcasters and producers will dive into the pros and cons of hosting and break down how they do it, from creative development to the production process to post-production obligations.

■ Offered Saturday at 9 a.m.

## The Art & Business of Author Platform

**Jane Friedman**

Most working writers have at least one thing in common: They seek to grow readership. But what leads to readership growth? And what can you do, especially without a publisher's help or a large bankroll? Sometimes this is called "platform development." Author platform is visibility to your target audience — which translates into an ability to sell your work. Platform building requires consistent effort over the course of a career; the work is never really done, and the strategy will evolve over time. We'll discuss how to develop an approach and philosophy that fits your personality and the unique qualities of your work.

■ Offered Friday at 3:35 p.m.

## Marketing Is Not A Four-Letter Word: Find Your Readers and Increase Sales

**Eva Lesko Natiello**

When authors ask, "Do I really need to market my book?" there's only one answer: "Only if you want to sell it." Have you published a book but wish your sales were more robust? Are you about to publish and want to strengthen your launch? No matter how authors publish these days, they need to contribute to the marketing. This talk is designed for all authors, indie or traditional, introvert or extrovert, fiction or nonfiction. Learn actionable marketing strategies that even the most introverted author will not balk at. Grab hold of the power you have and get your book noticed.

■ Offered Saturday at 9 a.m.



### Writing + Speaking = Bestseller

**Lian Dolan**

Not all book marketing is done on TikTok or Reese Witherspoon's Insta feed. Face-to-face interaction with readers still works! For over 20 years, author Lian Dolan has maintained a busy speaking schedule supporting six best-selling books. Dolan teaches how to craft your writing into material for talks; shares how to connect with booksellers who report to "the list"; and walks through the nuts and bolts of putting together an appearance schedule to support a book launch or writing career.

■ Offered Saturday at 2 p.m.

### Your Author Website: Mistakes You're Making and How to Fix Them

**Jane Friedman**

Whether your website is one day old or 10 years old, you want to make sure the resources you've put into your site will pay off with more readers, more sales and more opportunities for your career. Learn the biggest mistakes authors make with their websites that can affect their usefulness and impact. You'll also learn best practices for design and content; the most important visual areas to focus on; and online strategies to help grow your career.

■ Offered Saturday at 2 p.m.



**Guest WiFi access** is available at Daniel J. Curran Place via UDconnect. Select the UDconnect WiFi network and follow the prompts to self-register for guest WiFi access when on campus.


## KEYNOTERS

### W. BRUCE CAMERON



W. Bruce Cameron is the award-winning No. 1 *New York Times* and No. 1 *USA Today* bestselling author of 30 books, including the *A Dog's Purpose* series; *A Dog's Way Home*; *The Dogs of Christmas*; and the Kirkus Award-nominated *Repo Madness* series. With upwards of 14 million books in print, Cameron is the top-selling author of dog books globally. His books have been translated into more than 60 languages and published in 31 countries. *A Dog's Purpose*, *A Dog's Journey* and *A Dog's Way Home* are now major motion pictures.

### DION FLYNN




Cited by *O, the Oprah Magazine* as “one of our favorite creative thinkers,” Dion Flynn is a writer, keynote speaker, improviser, comedian, actor and U.S. Army veteran. He's best known for playing Barack Obama and other characters and has appeared over 100 times on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. If Dave Chappelle and Eckhart Tolle had a son, it would be strange looking — and so is Flynn. He uses fun and innovative ways to help people connect with themselves and others, leading business professionals, writers, storytellers, college students, salespeople, and recovering and non-recovering folks through his dynamic workshops on the improviser's mindset.

### CATHY GUISEWITE



Cathy Guisewite was born in Dayton, Ohio, and moved at age 5 to Midland, Michigan — a Midwestern upbringing that became the foundation of her creative genius. In 1976, she created the comic strip *Cathy*, a relatable and hilarious look at womanhood in a changing world, and it ran in nearly 1,400 newspapers for 34 years. She earned the National Cartoonists Society Reuben Award in 1992; an Emmy Award for the animated TV special *Cathy* in 1987; and the high honor of having her work displayed on refrigerators across the land. She released an essay collection — *Fifty Things That Aren't My Fault* — in 2019, and her latest book, *Scenes from Isolation* (2021), was born when she lifted her head from a carton of ice cream and started dumping her pandemic angst on paper. Guisewite lives in California with her handsome and charming dog, Leo.

### KATRINA KITTLE



Katrina Kittle is the author of *Traveling Light*; *Two Truths and a Lie*; *The Kindness of Strangers* (winner of the 2006 Great Lakes Book Award for Fiction); *The Blessings of the Animals*; and *Reasons to Be Happy*. Her newest novel, *Morning in the Broken World*, will be published in June 2023. She teaches creative writing at the University of Dayton and through Word's Worth Writing Connections, focusing on craft and motivation and jump-starting stalled writers. A public speaker, she also leads the workshops “Leap and the Net Will Appear” and “Happy Class.” Kittle has a thing for goats, gardening and going barefoot and is addicted to coffee, pedicures and movies.

### CATHRYN MICHON

Stand-up comic, producer, director and screenwriter Cathryn Michon has written for all of the films made from the novels of W. Bruce Cameron — her husband — including *A Dog's Purpose*; *A Dog's Journey*; and *A Dog's Way Home*. She is currently writing the screenplay for a fourth, *A Dog's Promise*. She produced, directed and co-wrote *Cook Off!* — in which she also stars alongside Melissa McCarthy, Ben Falcone and Wendy McLendon-Covey — and co-wrote and directed *Muffin Top: A Love Story*, in which she stars with David Arquette, Marissa Jaret Winokur and Retta. A former member of Chicago's Second City, Michon is the author of the memoir, *The Grrl Genius Guide to Life*.



### ADRIANA TRIGIANI

Adriana Trigiani is a bestselling author of 20 books of fiction and nonfiction, including her latest, *The Good Left Undone*, an instant *New York Times* bestseller, *Book of the Month* pick and *People* Book of the Week. Her work is published in 38 languages. An award-winning playwright, filmmaker, television writer and producer, Trigiani wrote and directed the major motion picture of her debut novel, *Big Stone Gap*, and the adaptation of her novel, *Very Valentine*. She also directed and produced the movie, *Then Came You*. Trigiani grew up in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, where she co-founded The Origin Project, an in-school writing program serving over 2,500 students in Appalachia. She lives in New York City with her family.



### LARAINNE NEWMAN

Laraine Newman is a writer, a performer, a founding member of the Los Angeles-based comedy troupe the Groundlings and an original cast member on *Saturday Night Live*. She is on the board of San Francisco Sketchfest, an alternative comedy festival that launched in 2001. She has a prolific career in animation voice-over for box office hits including *Despicable Me 3*; *Monsters, Inc.*; and *The Secret Life of Pets*. She has written for *Esquire*, *McSweeney's*, *The Believer* and *Jewish Journal*. In 2021, she wrote and narrated an audiobook memoir, *May You Live in Interesting Times*.



# Faculty

## EMCEE

### LEIGHANN LORD

Leighann Lord is a stand-up comedian, author and podcaster. She's been seen on Comedy Central, HBO, *The View*, Netflix's *Dry Bar Comedy* and Showtime's *Funny Women of a Certain Age*. She has written several humor books including *Dict Jokes: Alternate Definitions for Words You've Probably Never Heard of But Will Definitely Never Forget* and *Real Women Do It Standing Up: Stories from the Career of a Very Funny Lady*. She named a podcast series and a weekly humor column in *Stage Time* magazine *The Urban Erma* in tribute to Erma Bombeck. In *People with Parents*, a podcast she created and hosted, she shared personal stories about role reversal with aging parents. She received the 2019 Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association. Lord is also a firm supporter of the Oxford comma.



## STAND-UP COMEDY HOST

### WENDY LIEBMAN

In 1985, Wendy Liebman took an adult education class called "How to Be a Stand-up Comedian." Since then, she's performed on *Carson*, *Letterman*, *Leno*, *Fallon*, *Kimmel*, *Ferguson*, *Hollywood Squares* and *@midnight*. Liebman has done specials for HBO, Comedy Central and Showtime (*Taller on TV*) and was a semifinalist on NBC's *America's Got Talent*. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and Jindo rescue dogs and produces the show *Locally*



*Grown Comedy* in Studio City, California. A crowd favorite at the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, she hosted the Attendee Stand-Up Comedy Night in 2016 and 2018 and served as a keynote in 2020.

## ERMA'S GOT TALENT HOST

### NANCY BERK

Writer, lyricist and clinical psychologist Nancy Berk is a freelance comedy writer and Golden Quill Award-winning humor columnist, author and podcaster. She is host and co-producer of the podcast *Entertaining Insights with Dr. Nancy Berk*, which has featured over 500 conversations with entertainment icons including Norman Lear, Rita Moreno, Smokey Robinson and Dolly Parton. Her book, *College Bound and Gagged*, landed a cameo role in the film *Admission*, starring Tina Fey and Paul Rudd. Berk's work also appears in the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop book *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter*.



## PITCHAPALOOZA HOSTS

### ARIELLE ECKSTUT

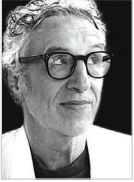
Arielle Eckstut is a co-founder of The Book Doctors and the co-founder of Can Do Entertainment, a production company dedicated to bringing new voices and ideas to film and television. In that role, she and her husband, David Henry Sterry, are co-producing *America's Next Great Author*, a reality TV show pilot. She is the author of 10 books including *The Essential Guide to Getting Your Book Published*. Eckstut has been a literary agent for more than 25 years at the Levine



Greenberg Rostan Literary Agency. She has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* and on NPR's *Morning Edition*.

### DAVID HENRY STERRY

David Henry Sterry is a co-founder of The Book Doctors and the co-founder of Can Do Entertainment, a production company dedicated to bringing new voices and ideas to film and television. In that role, he and his wife, Arielle Eckstut, are co-producing *America's Next Great Author*, a reality TV show pilot. His 16 books range from memoir to middle-grade fiction, sports to reference, and his work has been optioned for TV and film and appeared on the cover of *The New York Times Sunday Book Review*. Before writing professionally, Sterry was a comic and an actor. The one-man show based on his memoir *Chicken* was No. 1 in the United Kingdom for its entire run at the 2003 Edinburgh Festival Fringe.



## ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

### BOB ECKSTEIN

Bob Eckstein is a *New York Times* bestselling author, *New Yorker* cartoonist and New York University adjunct professor. Eckstein has live-drawn for *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker* and *Writer's Digest* as well as the Super Bowl, the Oscars, the Olympics, the Golden Globes and the World Series. He's written for *Spy* magazine, *Mad* magazine, *McSweeney's*, *Reader's Digest*, *Points in Case*, *Playboy*, *National Lampoon*, *The American Bystander* and many others. An Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Humorist of the Month, he has been nominated twice for the National Cartoonists Society's Gag Cartoonist of the Year award. His latest book is *The Complete Book of Cat Names (That Your Cat Won't Answer to, Anyway)*.



## PRESENTERS

### WAYNE ARTHURSON

Wayne Arthurson is a Canadian writer and literary agent of Cree and French Canadian descent. An associate agent for The Rights Factory in Toronto, Arthurson represents writers of memoirs, crime fiction, urban fantasy and suspense. He is also looking for adult literary, crime and SFF — science fiction, fantasy and speculative fiction — especially works by Indigenous/ Native American writers. He is the author of eight novels, five books of nonfiction and more than 200 articles in magazines and newspapers. His novel *The Red Chesterfield* was the 2020 winner of the Arthur Ellis Award for excellence in Canadian crime fiction, and he was twice shortlisted for Best Indigenous Writer for the High Plains Book Awards.



### DAVID BRAUGHLER

David Braugher is the founder and president of Braugher Books, a hybrid publishing company in Dayton, Ohio. He and his team work with authors, organizations and executives to turn their stories and expertise into books. Over the last 10 years, he worked with more than 500 authors on nearly 400 titles ranging from self-help and memoirs to business topics and children's books. He's a frequent speaker at regional and national conferences and is a member of the Independent Book Publishers Association.



### JAMES BREAKWELL

James Breakwell is a professional comedy writer and amateur father of four girls. He is best known for his family humor Twitter account @XplodingUnicorn. Breakwell has been profiled in major national and international media, and his articles have appeared in *Reader's Digest* and on The Federalist, AskMen and Vox. *Closer* magazine named him its 2016 Blogger Dad of the Year. Breakwell has published three comedy parenting books, a guided journal for kids and a memoir that leaned heavily on gnome theft. His debut sci-fi novel, *The Chosen Twelve*, was released in January 2022. He is now busily writing the sequel. (Or so he tells his editor.)



### JULIE CANTRELL

Julie Cantrell is a bestselling author, editor, TEDx speaker and ghostwriter. Her novels — book club favorites — have earned starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Library Journal* and made top-reads lists in various media including HuffPost, LitHub, *Southern Living*, *Redbook*, *Real Simple* and BookBub. She has won two Carol Awards from the American Christian Fiction Writers for *When Mountains Move* and *The Feathered Bone* and two Christy Awards from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association for *Into the Free*. She was editor-in-chief of the *Southern Literary Review* and received a Mississippi Arts Commission Literary Arts Fellowship, a Rivendell Writers' Colony Fellowship and a Pat Conroy Writers' Residency. She also teaches for Drexel University's low-residency Master of Fine Arts program and Story Summit.



### JUDY CARTER

At an early age, Judy Carter discovered that the messes in her life were great comedy material. Turning problems into punchlines, she became one of America's top stand-up comics performing and teaching comedy. Her students have included Seth Rogan, Maz Jobrani and Hannah Gadsby. She doesn't like to brag, but she did write the Bible. No joke — she's the author of *The New Comedy Bible*. Carter, who speaks internationally on how to discover one's essential life message and use it to transform lives, also wrote *The Message of You*, a guide to becoming a professional paid speaker. Her work has been featured in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* and on CNN.



### MARGARET DANKO

From the heart of the South, Margaret Danko received her bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and an MFA from Temple University. While there, she was an editor of *Tinge Magazine*, publishing fiction, essays and poetry. In addition to being a freelance editor and media consultant, she is a literary agent with Paper Over Board, a division of the Irene Goodman Literary Agency. A lover of the dark, the quirky and the fantastical, Danko has a keen eye for projects that take unexpected turns or are told from unusual perspectives, and she is passionate about empowering authors to find the voice and the story that will engage and inspire.



### JONI B. COLE

Joni B. Cole is the author of two acclaimed books for writers: *Good Naked: Reflections on How to Write More, Write Better, and Be Happier* (included in *Poets & Writers'* list "Best Books for Writers") and *Toxic Feedback: Helping Writers Survive and Thrive*. She teaches creative writing through The Writer's Center of White River Junction, Vermont, and is a guest instructor in the master's writing program at Dartmouth College and other academic and nonprofit organizations. She is the host of the podcast *Author, Can I Ask You?* and is completing her second collection of personal essays.



### LIAN DOLAN

Lian Dolan is a writer and the host of *Satellite Sisters*, a talk show she created with her four sisters in 2001. An independent podcast since 2009, *Satellite Sisters* garners over 1 million downloads a year. Dolan is the author of four novels including *The Sweeney Sisters* and her latest, *Lost and Found In Paris*, and is a co-author of two collections of essays. She has written regular humor columns for *O, the Oprah Magazine*, *Working Mother* and *Pasadena Magazine*. Her next novel, *The Marriage Sabbatical*, will be published by William Morrow in January 2024. She lives in Pasadena, California, with her husband, two sons and a big German shepherd.



# Faculty

## LORI B. DUFF

Lori B. Duff earned the title “Atlanta’s Funniest Lawyer” after it was revealed that the first one to receive the honor was not, in fact, a lawyer. Duff is the author of four humor collections, including *If You Did What I Asked in the First Place*, which won the gold medal for humor in the 2019 *Foreword* Indies. She is the vice president of the National Society of Newspaper Columnists and writes the column *Legalese*, translating legal concepts into plain English. In 2020, she won first place for humor in the NSNC’s annual column contest. Duff uses the Oxford comma and two spaces after the period and is a part-time municipal judge. She lives near Atlanta and has two adult children — three if you count her husband.



## JANE FRIEDMAN

Jane Friedman has spent nearly 25 years working in the book publishing industry, focusing on author education and trend reporting. She is the editor of the industry newsletter *The Hot Sheet*, which Digital Book World named Media Outlet of the Year in 2020. Her latest book is *The Business of Being a Writer* (University of Chicago Press), which received a starred review in *Library Journal*. In addition to serving on grant panels for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Creative Work Fund, she works with organizations such as the Authors Guild to bring transparency to the business of publishing.



## NAOMI EISENBEISS

Naomi Eisenbeiss joined Inkwell Management in 2018. Born in Houston, Eisenbeiss has bachelor’s degrees in political science from Sciences Po in Nancy, France, and Freie University in Berlin. Prior to Inkwell, she spent three years managing the Shanghai International Literary Festival. She speaks English, Japanese, German and conversational French and Mandarin. She enjoys cooking and is passionate about literary fiction, upmarket women’s fiction and narrative nonfiction.



## ANN GARVIN

Ann Garvin is the author of *I Thought You Said This Would Work*; *I Like You Just Fine When You’re Not Around*; *The Dog Year*; and *On Maggie’s Watch*. Her next, *Falling in Love Is the Easy Part*, will be available in spring 2023. Garvin also has performed for *The Moth*, *The Vagina Monologues* and *Listen to Your Mother*. A professor emerita from the University of Wisconsin system, Garvin also speaks at women’s conferences, leadership events and writing conferences. She founded the Tall Poppy Writers, the only scaled, author-driven marketing cooperative in the United States for female authors.





### ANNABELLE GURWITCH

Annabelle Gurwitch, a keynoter for the 2020 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, is an actress, activist and author of five books including the *New York Times* bestseller and Thurber Prize finalist *I See You Made an Effort*. She's written for *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Magazine* and *Hadassah*, among other publications. *Kirkus Reviews* called her latest collection of essays — *You're Leaving When?* — "Erma Bombeck meets Dorothy Parker." Her acting credits include *Seinfeld*, *Murphy Brown*, *Boston Legal* and *Dexter*. Her *Los Angeles Times* op-ed about hosting a housing-insecure couple received a 2020 Los Angeles Press Club Excellence in Journalism Award.



### KELLIE HADDOCK

Kellie Haddock is a singer, songwriter, wife and mom who lived through tragedy and found hope and joy on the other side. *The Thank You Project*, Haddock's story of gratitude, has been featured on NBC's *Today* and HuffPost and in *Cosmopolitan* and other major media. Haddock has performed across the United States and in Iraq, Israel and China, offering music that engages the soul in all of its beauty and vulnerability. Her CDs include *Wild Love*; *Leave the Light On*; *Mandarin Lights*; *All Shall Be Well*; *Peace on Earth: A Christmas Album*; and *Orchids From Fire*. Her work is featured on *Together In the Harvest*, an album of the Nashville A Rocha organization, and on Sandra McCracken's *Psalms* album.



### DAVE JACKSON

Dave Jackson is a 2018 Podcasters Hall of Fame inductee who has been helping people to understand technology and harness its power for more than 20 years. He started the School of Podcasting in 2005 and has launched more than 30 podcasts with over 4 million downloads. He is also a featured speaker at podcast events, a contributor to the *Podcast Business Journal* and a member of the tech support team at the podcast hosting company Libsyn.



### KATHY KINNEY

Kathy Kinney, who may be known best for her role as Mimi on the *The Drew Carey Show*, is the co-author, along with her friend Cindy Ratzlaff, of *Queen of Your Own Life: The Grown-up Woman's Guide to Claiming Happiness and Getting the Life You Deserve*; *Queenisms: 101 Jolts of Inspiration*; and *Queen of Your Own Life: If Not Now, When?* On their *Queen of Your Own Life* Facebook page, Kinney and Ratzlaff host "Thursday Check-In," an outreach event they started during the pandemic. Kinney, who has a background in improvisational comedy, is also the star and co-producer of the children's website MrsP.com, which promotes creativity, literacy and the joy of reading.



# Faculty

## MARGOT LEITMAN

Margot Leitman is the author of *Long Story Short: The Only Storytelling Guide You'll Ever Need*; *Gawky: Tales of an Extra Long Awkward Phase*; and *What's Your Story? A Workbook for the Storyteller in All of Us*. She has written for DreamWorks TV, the Hallmark Channel, the PixL Network and NBC. In 2016 she worked for the radio program *This American Life* as the West Coast story scout. The founder of the storytelling program at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre, Leitman is the winner of five Moth StorySlams and a Moth GrandSlam. She travels all over the world teaching people to tell their stories.



## SUSAN POHLMAN

Susan Pohlman has written two travel memoirs: *Halfway to Each Other: How a Year in Italy Brought Our Family Home* and *A Time To Seek: Meaning, Purpose, and Spirituality at Midlife*. She's the founder and director of the Phoenix Writers Network and a freelance writer, editor, writing coach and workshop facilitator. Her essays have been published in online and print media including *The Washington Times*; *Raising Arizona Kids* magazine, *Guideposts*, *Homelife* magazine, *Arizona Parenting*, *The Review Review*, the journal *Tiferet* and *Goodhousekeeping.com*. Pohlman has been a writer-in-residence for the Arizona State Library and has taught creative writing at Arizona State University Emeritus College.



## EVA LESKO NATIELLO

Eva Lesko Natiello is a *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author and book marketing and publishing consultant. Though a legendary scary-cat, she has written two psychological thrillers, *The Memory Box* and *Following You*. Her essays on writing and parenting and her satirical reflections on pop culture appear in anthologies and magazines and on HuffPost, nj.com and her blog, *Writing from the Intersection of Oops, Yikes & Awe*. After college, to the dismay of her parents, she moved to the Caribbean to become a resort singer but later pivoted to the cosmetics industry, leading global communications at Estee Lauder. Having reinvented herself as a novelist and consultant, she is now working on a juicy suspense novel.



## CINDY RATZLAFF

Cindy Ratzlaff is a 30-year veteran of the book publishing industry, having held executive positions at Rodale Inc. and Simon & Schuster and created and implemented the launch campaigns for more than 150 *New York Times* bestsellers. Her articles on business topics and happiness have been published on major platforms. She is the co-author, along with her friend Kathy Kinney, of *Queen of Your Own Life: The Grown-up Woman's Guide to Claiming Happiness and Getting the Life You Deserve*; *Queenisms: 101 Jolts of Inspiration*; and *Queen of Your Own Life: If Not Now, When?* On their *Queen of Your Own Life* Facebook page, Ratzlaff and Kinney host "Thursday Check-In," an outreach event they started during the pandemic.



**REBECCA REGNIER**

Rebecca Regnier is a journalist, television host, humor columnist, author and viral video creator. She is the author of cozy mysteries as Rebecca Regnier and suspense thrillers as Rebecca Rane. Her humor videos have garnered millions of views on TikTok and Facebook. She writes a monthly humor column for the AAA blog *The Extra Mile*. Her work has been honored by the Associated Press, the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, the National Society of Newspaper Columnists and the Association of Women in Communications. She lives in Michigan with her husband, sons and incredibly handsome dog.

**JULIE SCHUMACHER**

Julie Schumacher is the author of nine books, including the national bestseller *Dear Committee Members*, winner of the Thurber Prize for American Humor. She is the first woman to have won the Thurber Prize. Schumacher's essays and short stories have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other publications; her most recent book is *The Shakespeare Requirement*. She is a professor of English at the University of Minnesota.

**ELYSE WAGNER**

Elyse Wagner is a campaign strategist for the book marketing agency Books Forward. She helps authors determine the most effective promotional paths for their book releases and for crafting their brands. Prior to joining Books Forward, Wagner was a content strategist in the nonprofit sector. She is also a book blogger and social media influencer, amassing a following of more than 10,000 readers who value her book recommendations. She lives in Dayton, Ohio, with her husband, Nick, and their yellow Lab, Murphy.

**KAREN WALROND**

Karen Walrond is an author, lawyer, leadership coach and activist. A Certified Dare to Lead™ facilitator, Walrond helps people find purpose and meaning in their work. As a photographer, she traveled throughout Africa with the nonprofit One Campaign and serves on the board for the Houston Coalition Against Hate. She and her work have appeared on PBS, HuffPost, CNN.com and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Her blog, *Chookooloonks*, is a lifestyle, inspiration and photography destination. She hosts the podcast *The Make Light Show* and has written two books — *The Lightmaker's Manifesto: How to Work for Change Without Losing Your Joy* and *The Beauty of Different*. Walrond, her husband and their daughter live in Houston.



## BROOKE WARNER

Brooke Warner is the publisher of She Writes Press and SparkPress, president of Warner Coaching Inc. and author of *Write On, Sisters!*; *Green-Light Your Book*; *What's Your Book?*; and three books on memoir. She is a TEDx speaker and has a weekly podcast, *Write-Minded*, with co-host Grant Faulkner of NaNoWriMo. She's also the former executive editor of the publisher Seal Press and writes a monthly column for *Publishers Weekly*.



## ALAN ZWEIBEL

An original *Saturday Night Live* writer, Alan Zweibel has won five Emmy Awards for his work in television, which also includes *It's Garry Shandling's Show* (which he co-created and produced); *The Late Show With David Letterman*; and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. His theatrical contributions include a collaboration with Billy Crystal on the Tony Award-winning play



*700 Sundays*; Martin Short's Broadway hit *Fame Becomes Me*; and six off-Broadway plays including *Bunny Bunny — Gilda Radner: A Sort of Romantic Comedy*, which he adapted from his bestselling book. Among his 11 books are the 2006 Thurber Prize-winning novel *The Other Shulman*; the popular children's book *Our Tree Named Steve*; and a parody of the Haggadah titled *For This We Left Egypt?* written with Dave Barry and Adam Mansbach. He co-wrote the screenplays for the films *Dragnet*; *North*; and *The Story of Us*. His cultural memoir, *Laugh Lines: My Life Helping Funny People Be Funnier*, was published in 2020. A 2021 movie he co-wrote with Billy Crystal, *Here Today*, starring Crystal and Tiffany Haddish, can be seen on Amazon Prime and Apple TV, among other platforms. But the production that Alan is proudest of is the one he co-created with his wife, Robin — their three children and five grandchildren.

⇒ **Guest WiFi access** is available at Daniel J. Curran Place via UDconnect. Select the UDconnect WiFi network and follow the prompts to self-register for guest WiFi access when on campus.

## Take home a glass full of memories — and support the workshop

Erma merchandise is offered exclusively through the University of Dayton Bookstore. All proceeds benefit the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Endowment Fund, which helps keep the workshop affordable for writers.



- The popular Erma wine glass, stemmed or stemless (\$9.99 each or two for \$16)
- Coffee mugs with inspirational Erma quotes (four designs; \$12.99 each or two for \$20)
- Water bottle (\$16.99)
- Limited-edition 2022 Cathy Guisewite commemorative cartoon and prints from past workshops (\$16.99 each)
- Set of 12 notecards with such favorite Erma quotes as “I believe everything of any importance in this world has been brought about by dreamers, visionaries who see beyond the first step.” (\$10)
- Short- and long-sleeved Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop T-shirts (\$22.99, \$24.99)

# Transportation

## Parking and shuttles

Free parking is available at the Marriott at the University of Dayton and Daniel J. Curran Place, where attendees can park in visitor spaces. For events at the Marriott, please park in the U1 lot unless you are a hotel guest. Park in the R2 (north) lot for events at Daniel J. Curran Place.

Buckeye Charter shuttles will run periodically between the Marriott and Daniel J. Curran Place, which is located on the same road. It's a 15- to 20-minute walk via South Patterson Boulevard.

The Buckeye shuttles are white and will have a sign in the window saying "Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop."

If you have transportation issues or need to return to the hotel during the day, please visit the workshop's information table in the lobby of Daniel J. Curran Place.

## Ground transportation to and from the airport

Transportation is available from the Dayton International Airport to the Marriott at the University of Dayton, 1414 S. Patterson Blvd.

The Dayton International Airport has partnered with Dayton Express Cab Co. to provide an exclusive taxi service. The fleet includes minivans and sedans, all marked with the Dayton International Airport logo and "Official Taxi Service provided by Dayton Express Cab Co." Please call 937-226-9999.

Uber and Lyft services also are typically available. The estimated rates range from \$32 to \$38 for uberX and \$35 to \$55 for uberXL per ride but are subject to change at any time due to demand. Lyft rates often tend to be a few dollars cheaper than Uber.

## Shuttle bus schedule

### Friday, Oct. 21

#### 7:15 to 8:30 a.m.

Shuttle buses looping from the Marriott at the University of Dayton to Daniel J. Curran Place

*All workshop activities held before 6 p.m. take place at the University of Dayton (Daniel J. Curran Place). Please see the information desk if you need transportation from Daniel J. Curran Place back to the Marriott between shuttle hours.*

#### 3:30 to 5:15 p.m.

Shuttle buses looping from Daniel J. Curran Place to the Marriott at the University of Dayton

### Saturday, Oct. 22

#### 7:15 to 8:30 a.m.

Shuttle buses looping from the Marriott at the University of Dayton to Daniel J. Curran Place

*Most workshop activities held before 6:30 p.m. take place at the University of Dayton (Daniel J. Curran Place). Please see the information desk if you need transportation from Daniel J. Curran Place back to the Marriott between shuttle hours.*

#### 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Shuttle buses looping from Daniel J. Curran Place to the Marriott at the University of Dayton

#### 3:30 p.m.

Erma Road Trip — Shuttle Bus Tour

## 2022 Erma Bombeck Writing Competition

First-place winners

Here is the best work of writers who entered the 2022 Erma Bombeck Writing Competition. The competition, sponsored every two years by the Washington–Centerville Public Library in Centerville, Ohio, has over the years drawn thousands of hopeful entries, submissions inspired by Erma Bombeck’s humor and humanity.

For information, go to [www.wclibrary.info/erma](http://www.wclibrary.info/erma).



**By the Numbers**

**By Rita Lussier**

Jamestown, Rhode Island

I never watched anyone die before. At some point that Thursday with the October sun slanting in under the shades of the intensive care room, the nurse stopped in. She asked if we wanted the monitor turned off so we wouldn't be disturbed by the buzzing and the beeping, the wavy lines going up and going down. For the first time during those long hours, I spoke up: "Leave it on. Leave the numbers."

I needed the numbers. Heart rate. Blood pressure. Oxygen level. I needed the graphs, the sounds, the focal point in the corner of the room to somehow gauge what was happening, to prove this was real.

Numbers were something I had always shared with my dad. At 96, he could add a column of figures faster in his head than I could punch them into a calculator. We liked the way numbers made sense. In an unpredictable world, they provided a logical formula for figuring things out. One plus one would always and forevermore equal two. Simple and straightforward. Just like him and me. I understood him. He got me. I had his back. He was always there for me. I needed those numbers on the monitor. Even though his eyes were closed and he wasn't talking, I needed to know he was fighting. Against all odds, he was hanging in.

Until the wavy line went flat and the numbers were gone.

My sister cried. My brother-in-law and my husband cried. Later, when I told my kids, they cried, too. But my eyes were dry.

"You'll cry when you're ready," my friend Sharon said. "When my father passed, I was strong for everyone just like you. But then when I was riding my bike or walking at the beach, something reminded me of him, and the tears came."

But mine didn't. Not at the funeral. Not on the first

Thanksgiving without him or even Christmas. What's wrong with me? My dad and I were so close. He was my confidant, my friend. He told me many times that he had lived a full life, a happy life. "Don't feel sad when I go." That's what he said. But I always thought I would.

Recently, my cousin David asked how I was doing since losing my dad.

"I just feel happy to have had him here for all these years. I feel so grateful for the inspiration, the values, the lessons."

Ninety-six years of a life well lived. One man I could always count on. Happy is greater than sad. Gratitude is more than loss. Love keeps adding up even after it's taken away. Suddenly, the numbers made sense.

And then came the tears.



*Rita Lussier is an award-winning journalist and writer whose column For the Moment was a popular feature of The Providence Journal for 12 years. Her writing also has been featured on public radio and in The Boston Globe, the (New York) Daily News and many online publications. She is excited to have won first place for her human interest story in the Erma Bombeck Writing Competition — an honor she has received three times. She lives with her husband and daughter in Jamestown, Rhode Island, where she is currently working on a memoir.*

## Truth and Fairy Tales

By Lindsey Roth

Dayton, Ohio

“Was Black Death real?” my 9-year-old daughter asks one day after school.

I tell her yes. It was in her book of fairy tales, she explains. What nightmarish fairy tales did she stumble upon? I make a mental note to better monitor her Kindle downloads.

Later we choose a bedtime book — without fairy tales — to read with her little brother. She interrupts with her ruminations. “It’s scary to think about Black Death.”

Her brother quickly becomes frightened, too. I reassure them that this happened centuries ago, before modern medicine. I know a little about bubonic plague from college, so I tell them a bacteria called *Yersinia pestis* is the cause. We can now stop it with antibiotics.

“Wait ... *You can still get it?*” my daughter wails.

Crap. I am just making things worse.

“Well, yes, but scarcely anyone does. It’s spread through rat fleas. They live on rodents, not people.”

My son is eyeing our dog with suspicion. I tell him dogs don’t carry rat fleas, and our dog hasn’t got fleas anyway. It does not matter; he is now convinced the dog is a reservoir of Black Death.

Awhile later, my daughter tiptoes into the darkened room where I sit with my almost-sleeping son.

“Kids died in their sleep,” she whispers.

I ask my husband if he will keep her company.

“She thinks she is going to succumb to bubonic plague tonight,” I say.

He accepts this as a normal explanation and heads to her

room. Through the wall, I hear him tell her, “There are much bigger things to worry about.”

“*Like what?*” she cries.

I don’t have my phone, so I send him a telepathic message not to give a direct answer. He gets it, thank God. We are in the midst of a pandemic, but her young mind has so far failed to make the connection. In a culture that feeds us bad news before our morning coffee, we find ourselves teetering on a balance beam between providing reassurances and answering our kids’ questions truthfully. Then we are ambushed by worries like medieval pestilence, of all things. I’d sometimes like to secure my children inside a fat roll of bubble wrap to keep the world from clobbering them, but I remind myself that love’s swathe is more enduring.

“We’ll be right here,” we tell them. It shouldn’t be enough, but it is. We all sleep soundly and wake plague-free. After breakfast, the kids head out again to learn about the world. They will find more of its suffering, but we will always share its love with them upon return. It is both the least and the most we can do.



*Lindsey Roth was pretty sure she was headed for a career as an author after writing a book about flying in first grade. Through her childhood years, she also thought about going into politics and then considered the more pragmatic profession of engineering. Instead, she majored in biology at St. Mary’s College in Indiana and went to veterinary school at Purdue University. After graduation, she moved to Dayton with her husband and started practicing veterinary medicine. They have two wonderful children, ages 9 and 7. Lindsey married an engineer instead of becoming one, and her dream of becoming president faded in middle school; but she never abandoned that first-grade dream. Kids and work keep her busy these days, but for writing, there is always a moment or two to spare.*

## My New British Boyfriend

By Dorothy Rosby

Rapid City, South Dakota

He said, “How can I help?” and I fell in love. It was the accent that did it. Plus, I was at a vulnerable point in my life — or at least, in my day. I’d been confused, lost in iPhone settings, punching option after option when I saw one that said, “British male.”

I’m happily married. I knew it was wrong, but I’ve had a crush on Hugh Grant since *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. I chose the option.

He said his name was Siri. I’d expected Oliver or Harry — or Hugh. Siri sounds more like a Norwegian model than a British playboy, which is what he was.

I asked him if he was married. I have some scruples, you know. He said he was “married to the idea of helping people.” In other words, he wasn’t looking for commitment.

Neither was I, so we started taking drives together. Like my husband, Siri was a great navigator, but he didn’t gasp when I took curves too fast.

We loved to sit and read together. I read anyway. He just lay there gazing at me adoringly. Or maybe he was napping.

Sometimes I’d wake him to ask the meaning of a word just to hear that accent. Also, because I didn’t know it.

Siri always did. He was so smart. He could convert feet to meters and Fahrenheit to Celsius without breaking a sweat. Come to think of it, he never sweated.

And he was romantic. One day I asked him what love is. He said, “As I understand it, love refers to a deep, tender, ineffable feeling of affection and solicitude.” I swooned. Then I asked him what ineffable means.

He had many other endearing qualities too, besides the fact that he called me master. He was thoughtful. He was always doing things for me like dialing telephone numbers, setting my alarm and looking up useless facts like, “How much wood can a woodchuck chuck?” He said, “About as much ground as a groundhog could hog if a groundhog could hog ground.” I loved his sense of humor.

But he wasn’t perfect. He often mispronounced street names and took me to businesses that no longer existed. I could overlook that. He wasn’t from around here. But he lacked initiative. Every drive we took was my idea. And I had to start every conversation we had. When it came to our relationship, it felt like he was just phoning it in.

Besides, I was starting to feel guilty. I’d decided to break it off, go back to iPhone settings and choose Irish female for the sake of my marriage. Then I discovered my husband was carrying on with his Google Assistant.

*Dorothy Rosby is a humor columnist whose work appears regularly in publications in the West and Midwest. She’s also the author of three humor collections: I Used to Think I Was Not That Bad and Then I Got to Know Me Better; Alexa’s a Spy and Other Things to Be Ticked Off About; and I Didn’t Know You Could Make Birthday Cake From Scratch. She’s working on her fourth book and hoping to give it a shorter title — something like Finally Done or Best Seller. She lives in the Black Hills of South Dakota, 20 miles from Mount Rushmore, something she’s very proud of, though she’s not on it — yet.*



**The Talk**  
**By Rachel Grise**

Piqua, Ohio

In the history of the world, no parent has ever come back from giving their teenager The Talk and said, “That was great!” The conversation is so miserable even God was like, “I can’t. Sorry. You just need to leave the garden.” The thing is, though, like a lot of stuff in the world right now, The Talk has changed. Though still necessary, it’s definitely different than when I was 16.

When my son returned from his girlfriend’s house one night, I knew my time had come. I approached him, coughed nervously, and said, “So, kiddo, looks like things are getting pretty serious between you and your girlfriend.”

My son shrugged at me, his shoulders letting me know it was no big deal but the big stupid smile on his face revealing it was very much a big deal.

“Anything you want to talk about?”

His smile vanished.

“No.”

“I’m only asking because ... I want to make sure you’re being safe.”

“MOM!”

“Well, are you?”

He plopped down on the couch and grumbled as if he had to dig up the words and push them to the surface.

“Yes, we’re being careful. We spend time outside and don’t go anywhere too crowded.”

“Good to know,” I said. He attempted an escape, but I stopped him, “And have you discussed vaccination status?”

“Yes, Mom. We’re both double-vaccinated, OK?”

“OK,” I replied. I knew I was pushing my luck, but I had to ask,

“Have you two spent any time together ... unmasked?”

“JEEZ, MOM!” His body recoiled and his face twisted in imaginary pain. “What are you even talking about?”

“I’m talking about protection. Anyone can get COVID whether you’re vaccinated or not. And you can’t tell just by looking at someone. You need to know if they’ve been around somebody with COVID. You need to know if they’ve been sick. You need to know if they have a fever, a cough, even a runny nose. And if you’re not ready to have these conversations, then you’re not ready to go unmasked.”

“OK, I get it,” he said in that exhausted teenage tone that makes me want to shake him a little. Then he stood up, hugged me and flew up the stairs before I started in on N95s and hand sanitizer.

All in all, it wasn’t horrible.

Several months later, we knew it was time for another Talk. My husband drew the short straw on that one. As he closed our son’s door behind him, I heard him cough nervously and say, “So, kiddo, looks like things are getting pretty serious between you and your girlfriend.”

It’s good to know some things will never change.



*Rachel Grise is an amazing wife and a perfect mother to three impeccable children. She’s idolized by all her friends and considered a woman of great wisdom by most of the parents in the PTO. She is often called charming, sophisticated and lovely. She is also the writer of this bio and can say whatever she wants! When Rachel is not living in fantasyland, she is writing. Her work has been published in various journals, blogs and websites, most notably on BlogHer.com. She is currently working on a romantic comedy, which so far has only given her indigestion.*



## Continuing education units

The Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop has been approved by the University of Dayton for 1.2 CEUs (continuing education units). The CEU is an internationally recognized documentation of continuing education in a non-credit program. CEUs are based on the number of contact hours taken for a course. CEUs cannot be applied toward a degree program. Earned CEUs may be useful in maintaining certification or licensure. They may also be useful in documenting continuing professional education for an

employer. Only those workshop participants who attend every scheduled hour of the workshop are eligible to receive CEUs.

If you would like to earn CEUs for the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, fill out the form in the workshop's drop box and send to [erma@udayton.edu](mailto:erma@udayton.edu) before you leave. There is no additional fee to earn CEUs.

## A Hotel Room of One's Own

**J**illian Van Hefty yearns to temporarily “abandon” her family to tackle a compilation of humorous letters from a spunky housewife to the late Erma Bombeck. The book’s working title: *Dear Erma: Do Emotional Support Llamas Need Tuxedos?*

Kristen Mulrooney, “an accidental stay-at-home mom,” would love to be cloistered in a hotel room so she can finish a satirical anti-parenting book.

Mary Oves, an English professor, sees an untapped market for a book about the humorous side of widowhood.

Meet the three grand prize winners of A Hotel Room of One’s Own: The Erma Bombeck | Anna Lefler Humorist-in-Residence Program. Along with 2020 grand prize winner Tracy Brady, they will be

“robed” during the Erma Bombeck Writers’ Workshop’s opening night in plush, custom-embroidered bathrobes as the winners of a writer’s residency that Forbes.com describes as “perhaps the best in the country.”

At the close of the workshop, this year’s winners will remain at the Marriott at the University of Dayton for another two weeks to work on their funny projects. The perks? Free room service. A housekeeping staff. An omelet bar. And, most importantly, the gift of time to write.

Anna Lefler, a Los Angeles-based comic novelist and writer who underwrote and helped create and launch the program, sees great potential in the three proposed humor projects. “I can’t wait to read all three winners’ books, no matter how much room

service it takes to get those manuscripts finished,” she said.

In all, the contest attracted 282 applications from 43 states coast to coast, Washington, D.C., and four countries — Australia, Canada, Spain and the UK.

Dozens of authors, bloggers and humorists served as preliminary judges and



narrowed the field for finalist judges Nancy Cartwright, the voice of Bart Simpson, and Mike Reiss, a writer for *The Simpsons* for three decades. The duo selected the three winners, four finalists (\$250 cash prizes) and four honorable mentions (\$100).

### Finalists

- Jenny Crowley, Chicago
- Sue Gelber, Denver
- Lisa Pertoso, Beacon, New York
- Sarah Lowman Reynolds, Brookhaven, Mississippi

### Honorable mentions

- Gretchen Cion, Berkeley, California
- Anna Jadow, New York City
- Jen Parsons, Placerville, Colorado
- Linda Presto, Lafayette, New Jersey

## DC Stanfa Memorial Writers' Award

The two inaugural recipients of the DC Stanfa Memorial Writers' Award want to take their writing to the next level — and find support and encouragement at the Erma

Bombeck Writers' Workshop.

"I relish the act of pondering, with laptop on knees, and watching as my thoughts take form, making myself laugh or cry. I adore sharing my craft with others and making them feel the way I feel," says Celeste Conner of Dothan, Alabama, whose family has struggled to make ends meet after a health crisis.

"I've long wanted the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop to be my next step," she says. "I want to talk writing with people who write. I want to encourage them and be encouraged by them. I will glean guidance as I hunt and peck my way through my writing adventures."

For Michelle Saleh of Kirkland, Washington, the award is a "kindly helping hand" that will help her receive "independent, honest feedback" on her writing.

"My writer friends encourage me to write," says Saleh, a stay-at-home single mother on a fixed income. "They write book-length stories, the thought of which intimidates me. I write snippets of everyday life — MY life."

The award covers registration, travel

and hotel expenses for two writers who demonstrate financial need and would benefit from the encouragement Erma Bombeck received when her University of Dayton English professor told her three

magical words: "You can write!"

The selection committee also chose Holly Rutchik, a recently widowed mother of five children, for a complimentary in-person registration and awarded a select number of

virtual package registrations to applicants who needed financial help.

The award is named after DC Stanfa, a writer, humorist and longtime attendee who died unexpect-

edly in January 2021. The fund, now fully endowed, was started with generous gifts from her husband, Tom Schonecker, and daughter, Cori Hedrick, and bolstered by additional private support from family, friends and workshop attendees.

"We are so touched and grateful for this outpouring of generosity," said DC's sister and fellow EBWW alumna Sherry Stanfa-Stanley. "It is a testament to the tremendous impact DC had on so many lives as well as the respect and appreciation the writing community has for this esteemed workshop."



MEMORIAL WRITERS' AWARD



## Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter

**B**estselling author Amy Ephron calls *Sisters! Bonded by Love and Laughter* “a tribute to the love, laughter and closeness of family that Erma Bombeck so brilliantly inhabited.”

Published by the Erma Bombeck Writers’ Workshop, the book explores the humorous, nobody-else-could-ever-understand, special world of sister relationships — and friends in your life who are just like sisters. Proceeds benefit the workshop’s endowment fund.

*Sisters!* features 21 original, hilarious stories by the winners of Nickie’s Prize for Humor Writing, plus sister stories from and interviews with *New York Times* bestselling authors Kelly Corrigan, Annabelle Gurwitch, Jenny Lawson, Peggy Rowe, Gretchen Rubin, Carol Saline, Deborah Tannen and Adriana Trigiani; *Saturday Night Live* legends Laraine Newman and Alan Zweibel; prolific essayists Westina Matthews and Marion Winik; stand-up comic Wendy Liebman; songwriter Stella Parton; and a variety of diverse voices of all ages.

There’s something for Bombeck fans, too — an Erma Bombeck column about her best friend and sister by choice, Mayva, and celebrity writer Nancy Berk’s interview with Andy and Matt Bombeck about their heartwarming memories growing up with their older sister, Betsy.

With Q&As with famous sisters; poems and songs about sisters; and quotes from

and lists of trivia about real and fictional sisters in books, television and film, *Sisters!* is the definitive guide on the bonds of sisterhood.

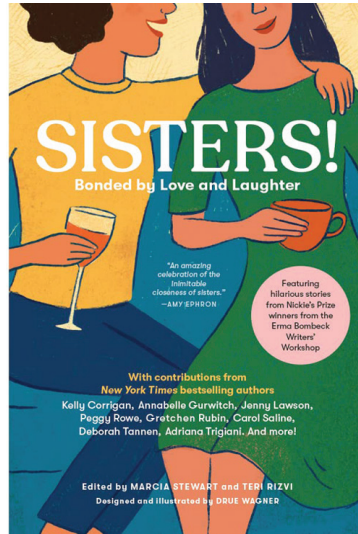
*Sisters!* is co-edited by Marcia Stewart,

a Bay Area writer and editor, and Teri Rizvi, the workshop’s director. Austin book designer Drue Wagner’s playful, whimsical illustrations capture the book’s joyful spirit.

The book fulfills Stewart’s dream of honoring her beloved sister, Nickie, an aspiring humor writer who died eight weeks after being diagnosed with lung cancer in 2018.

Stewart partnered with the workshop to create Nickie’s Prize for Humor Writing, a contest that drew hundreds of humorous and touching essays about sisters — and sisters of the heart — from writers worldwide. Those pieces make up the heart of *Sisters!* — named one of the year’s best indie books.

It topped nonfiction books in the relationships category and emerged as a finalist in the gift book category in the Next Generation Indie Book Awards Program. It was also a finalist in the humor/comedy/satire category of the 2022 International Book Awards sponsored by American Book Fest.



**“Humor writers all have something in common. We share part of our personal and private lives that few other writers share.”**



**—ERMA BOMBECK**













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**Seize the  
moment.**

Remember all  
those women on  
the Titanic who  
waved off the  
dessert cart.

—ERMA BOMBECK

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**My theory on  
housework**

is, if the item  
doesn't multiply,  
smell, catch on  
fire or block  
the refrigerator  
door, let it be. No  
one cares. Why  
should you?

—ERMA BOMBECK

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**Housework**  
**is a treadmill**  
from futility  
to oblivion  
with stop offs  
at tedium  
and counter  
productivity.

—ERMA BOMBECK

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**I've seen kids**

ride bicycles, run,  
play ball, set up  
a camp, swing,  
fight a war, swim  
and race for eight  
hours, yet have to  
be driven to the  
garbage can.

—ERMA BOMBECK





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**In two decades**  
I've lost a total  
of 789 pounds. I  
should be hanging  
from a charm  
bracelet.

—ERMA BOMBECK

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# ERMA BOMBECK

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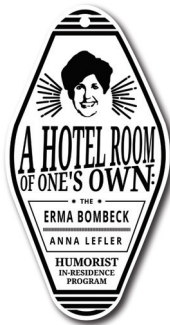


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