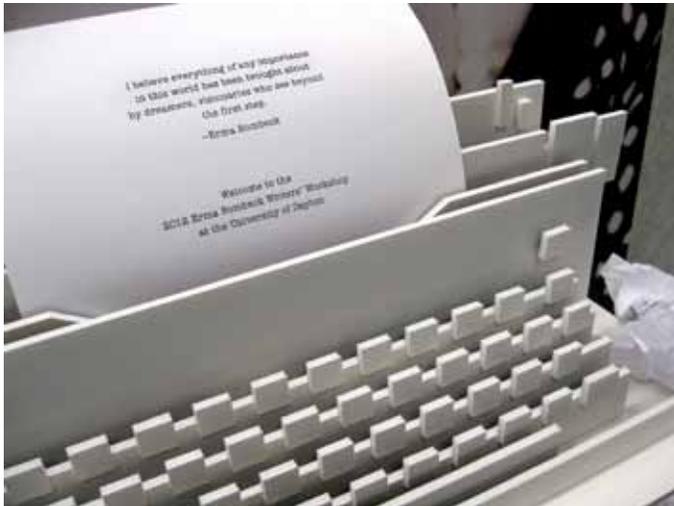


## An Interview with Teri Rizvi

Founder, Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop

The late humorist and longtime columnist Erma Bombeck (1927-1996) needs no introduction. She kept us laughing and entertained through her syndicated column—"At Wit's End"—which ran for 31 years in more than 900 newspapers. Besides writing 12 books, she became a TV personality, sought-after speaker and often-quoted author. My most favorite quote of hers is, "The only reason I would take up jogging is so I could hear heavy breathing again."



*A faux typewriter, which was displayed at the 2012 EBWW event. Erma only wrote on a typewriter.*

Erma graduated from the University of Dayton in 1949 with a degree in English. An active alumna, she was the school's most noted graduate. The University of Dayton Alumni Association created the Erma Bombeck Online Museum ([www.ErmaMuseum.org](http://www.ErmaMuseum.org)) and also sponsors the biennial Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop, which draws hundreds of writers from across the country.

*Continued on page 2*



*Happy  
October!*



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[Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com](mailto:Writer@PublishingSyndicate.com)



## An Interview with Teri Rizvi



For this month's feature, I had the wonderful opportunity to interview Teri Rizvi (pictured at left), the founder of the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop. She is extremely accomplished when it comes to writing and publishing—below is her short bio:

Teri Rizvi is executive director of strategic communications for the University of Dayton, where she founded the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop. She also serves on the board of directors of the Antioch Writers' Workshop in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Ohio University in 1980 and a master's degree in English from the University of Dayton in 1990. A journalist early in her career, she worked for the *Associated Press*, *McGraw-Hill World News*, *ABC News* and various newspapers. Her freelance work has appeared in *USA Today*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and *The Guardian* (London), among other outlets.

**Dahlynn:** Please share with our readers how the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop came to be?

**Teri:** The University of Dayton held the first Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop (EBWW) in 2000. It was to be a one-time event to commemorate the Bombeck family's gift of Erma's papers to her alma mater. Erma's famous friends—columnist Art Buchwald, cartoonist Bil Keane and author and ERA advocate Liz Carpenter—headlined the event. We thought a writers' workshop in Erma's name would be an outstanding tribute to her legacy. It proved to be so popular that we decided to offer it again—and again and again. It's now offered every other spring. The next one will be held April 10-12, 2014.

On a personal note, I first met Erma in 1988 when she was serving on the University of Dayton's board of trustees, and I was managing a video project. For the camera, she recounted an anecdote about an English professor who encouraged her to write humor. He told her three words that sustained her for life: "You can write!" Her words spoke to me as a young writer—and later became the genesis for the EBWW.

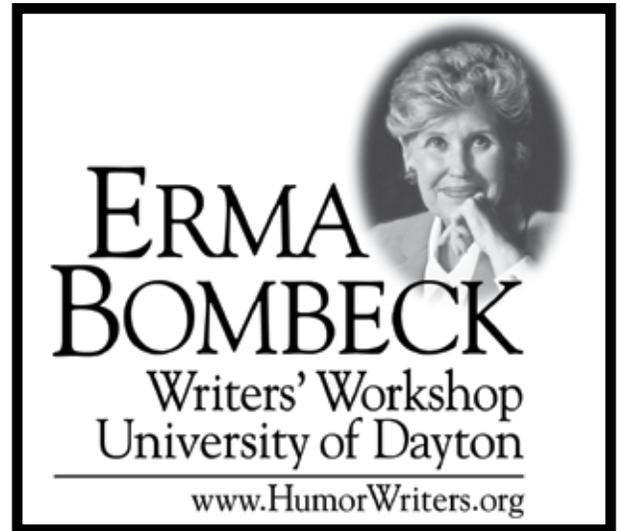
For more, see <http://humorwriters.org/2012/05/24/part-love-letter-part-pep-talk>

*Continued on page 3*

## An Interview with Teri Rizvi

**D:** Why is the conference held every other year?

**T:** The workshop is a labor of love that we run on a shoestring. Different talented colleagues in the University of Dayton's communications office have directed the workshop at various times, with my involvement. I'm co-directing the 2014 EBWW with Annette Taylor, assistant professor of journalism at the University of Dayton, with the help of a planning committee of creative people—writers, marketing experts and a graphic designer.



For all of us involved with the conference, this is not our “day job,” just our passion, so we opted for an every-other-year schedule. During the day, we produce a faculty/staff newspaper and an alumni magazine, write and pitch stories to reporters, craft talking points on issues, run news conferences, produce content for the University's website, create ads and brochures, etc. We're in charge of marketing the University of Dayton, a top-tier Catholic research-university that draws students from around the globe. Erma Bombeck is one of our most outstanding graduates.



**D:** Erma Bombeck was legendary when it came to the way she viewed the world, and then how she shared those views through her writing. What aspect of her work do you believe became her signature/style?

**T:** To those who grew up with Erma's columns hanging on their refrigerator doors, Erma always felt like she could be your next-door neighbor. Her writing captured the foibles of family life in a way that made us laugh at ourselves. She wrote with humor and poignancy.

Her signature/style? Her beat was everyday life, and she wrote about it with hilarity.

*Continued on page 4*

## An Interview with Teri Rizvi

**D:** Sometimes humor does not come easily to writers. Not everyone is funny. Can you share three tips on how writers can improve their skills when it comes to humor writing?

**T:** I polled the EBWW Facebook audience for their best advice:

1) Be able to laugh at yourself first. A little self-deprecation goes a long way. From Amy Mullis: “When something happens to me, I think, ‘If I were going to tell this to people, how would I embellish or twist it to make them laugh?’ The light globe fell off the fan in the kitchen narrowly missing me last night. My story will be, ‘The kitchen is trying to save the world by stopping me from cooking.’”

2) Read humorous works and soak them in. “Learn the cadence, the rhythm and word usage,” says Mary Catlett.

3) Don’t force it. “Use a light, deft touch,” advises Kathy Turski. Adds Carol Band, “(Humor is) not a funny situation—it’s how you view life—everyday situations. It’s a distinct voice, a fresh personality, a perspective that brings people together in the understanding that they are not alone in this absurdity that is life.”

**D:** Besides Erma, are there any other writers in the humor genre you enjoy reading?

**T:** I’ve always loved Dave Barry. You laugh out loud when you read his absurd and hysterical take on life.

*Continued on page 5*

### Terri invites you to enter EBWW’s writing contest!

Capture the essence of Erma’s writings and you could win \$500 and a free registration to the Erma Bombeck Writers’ Workshop in April 2014! Click the “free” graphic to learn more.



## An Interview with Teri Rizvi

**D:** Technology has changed the face of writing over the last 10 years, from blogging to self-publishing. Erma passed away in 1996, before this technology took off. If she were with us today, what do you believe would be her view on all of this?

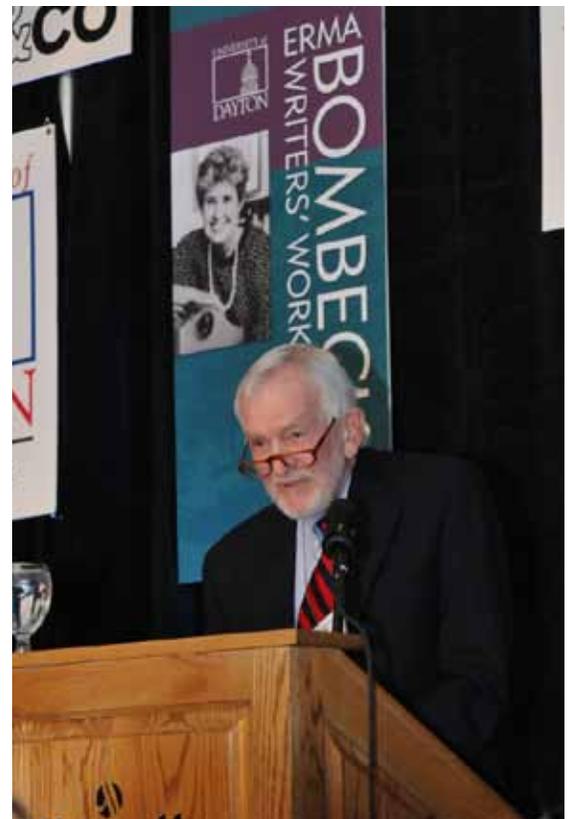
**T:** I think Erma would be reluctant to use new technology, but would appreciate the new avenues open to writers.

When I interviewed her in 1991 for a Q&A in the University of Dayton *Quarterly*, we talked about why she wrote her columns on a typewriter instead of a computer. “They don’t write funny,” she said. I responded, “They write quicker, don’t they?” She said, “Quicker, but not funny. I have a Selectric IBM. When I bought it a couple of years ago, they said, ‘This is it. When it goes, it goes.’ When it goes, I’ll have it repaired. It’s comfortable for me. We have a word processor, but I don’t use it. I don’t even use the FAX machine. I’m lucky to plug in an iron (laughing). I have no patience. It’s really strange. I have patience with my writing—I can rewrite for weeks on end. But when it comes to assembling a box for Christmas, I can’t do that. I just want to rip it apart.”

**D:** What should a first-time workshop participant know or do to prepare before the workshop?

**T:** Come prepared to laugh for three days—and be inspired, encouraged and supported. Emcee Patricia Wynn Brown dubs the workshop the “Woodstock of Humor.” This writers’ workshop is different from any other in the country—it is part love letter, part family reunion, part pep talk.

It’s a tremendous opportunity to soak in advice, tips and encouragement from other writers. The networking opportunities are enormous. We encourage writers to learn not just from the faculty, but also from each other.



*Erma's husband, Bill Bombeck, speaking at the 2012 EBWW conference.*

*Continued on page 6*

# The Wow Principles e-newsletter

## An Interview with Teri Rizvi

**D:** Do you have any scoops/inside tips you can share with our readers about the 2014 workshop?

**T:** We're still finalizing the program, but it's shaping up to be a very strong line-up of keynoters and faculty. For the first time, we'll be offering "Pitchapalooza," what's been called the *American Idol* for books. Writers with an idea for a book have the chance to pitch it to a panel of judges who critique their pitches. All attendees will come away with advice on how to improve their pitch, as well as a greater understanding of the ins and outs of the publishing industry.

**D:** I know many of our readers will want to attend the conference. How soon can they sign up?

**T:** We hope to open registration in December. We'll announce the details through our blog, Facebook and Twitter feeds and monthly newsletter. I invite your readers to subscribe to our free monthly email newsletter by visiting our blog ([humorwriters.org](http://humorwriters.org)) and typing in their email address under "Subscribe to our Newsletter."

More info on the upcoming EBWW conference and to join their social media:

EBWW website: [www.humorwriters.org](http://www.humorwriters.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ermabombeck](http://www.facebook.com/ermabombeck)

Twitter: [@ebww](https://twitter.com/ebww)



## In next month's issue...

John Schlimm, our guest columnist for September's WP newsletter ("Top 5 Tips for Writing a Cookbook") is back again, sharing his top tips on promoting your book and making it a bestseller.

And because we've received so many great photos of contributors at various Publishing Syndicate book-signing events around the country, we will share some of the photos in November's newsletter. If you haven't sent in your photos for any *NYMB*, *Stand Up!* or *The Cow-Pie Chronicles* events, please do so no later than November 15th. JPG photos, only: [Ken@PublishingSyndicate.com](mailto:Ken@PublishingSyndicate.com)



## It's NaNoWriMo Time!

We'll let the gang from NaNoWriMo explain this year's information (borrowed from their "About Us" page):

"National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) is a fun, seat-of-your-pants approach to creative writing. On November 1, participants begin working towards the goal of writing a 50,000-word novel by 11:59 p.m. on November 30. Valuing enthusiasm, determination, and a deadline, NaNoWriMo is for anyone who has ever thought fleetingly about writing a novel.

National Novel Writing Month is also a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that believes your story matters. You know how writing makes the world a more creative, vibrant place. Through NaNoWriMo—as well as our Young Writers Program, the Come Write In program, and Camp NaNoWriMo—we work hard to empower and encourage that vibrant creativity around the world. We can't do it without writers like you."

Finally write that novel! Sign up at [www.NaNoWriMo.org](http://www.NaNoWriMo.org).

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## **This announcement will scare anyone who ships product to Canada!**

Effective January 1, 2014, we have no choice but to require our Canadian contributors to use PS' International Permission Release Form (IPRF). PS can no longer provide Option A (10 complimentary copies) to our friends to the north, but only Option B (one comped copy and royalties). The reason for this is because shipping prices from the U.S. to Canada have skyrocketed. This new policy will not impact those who have already signed PRFs for *On Family*, *On Being a Mom* and *On Holidays*.

NOTE: We are working on a way for Canadian contributors to have the option to pay the difference in shipping costs if they prefer to receive books in lieu of royalties. This will hopefully happen before we issue the next set of PRFs in Spring 2014.

Also, because shipping costs are so exhorbenent, if you are an existing Canadian NYMB contributor, we recommend you order books from Amazon.ca instead of taking advantage of your 50-percent discount if your order directly from PS. At last check, it cost \$46 to ship six books to Canada. And don't forget the extra charges by Canadian customs. Scary.



# The Wow Principles e-newsletter

## “Show Me Your NYMB!” Contest

The spotlight is on YOU! Create an original video that highlights at least one of these six *Not Your Mother's Books* (NYMB): *On Being a Woman*; *On Being a Stupid Kid*; *On Dogs*; *On Travel*; *On Being a Parent*; and *On Home Improvement*.

The goal is to be daring, different, funny and smart in such a unique way as to generate much public interest and intrigue for this new series of anthology books. The sky is the limit! It's your chance to create the next YouTube sensation and help spread the word about the NYMB series!

### Prizes

First place: \$150 and six NYMB books of your choice (\$101 retail value)

Second place: \$75 and six NYMB books of your choice (\$101 retail value)

Third place: \$25 and six NYMB books of your choice (\$101 retail value)



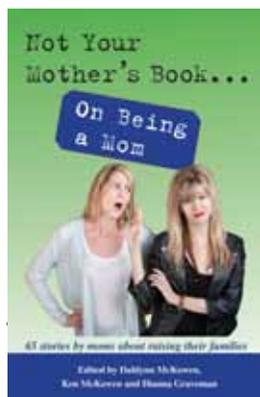
**Deadline:** Entries must be posted on YouTube.com by 5 p.m. PST on Monday, November 18, 2013.

Contest information can be found at the PS website or by clicking this link:  
[http://www.publishingsyndicate.com/video\\_contest.html](http://www.publishingsyndicate.com/video_contest.html)

## Book Updates...

### **NYMB...On Pets deadline extended to December 1st**

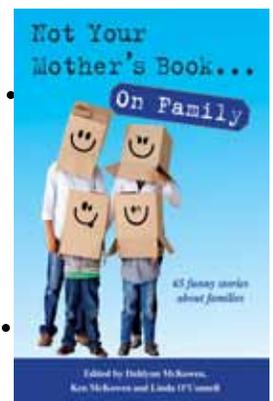
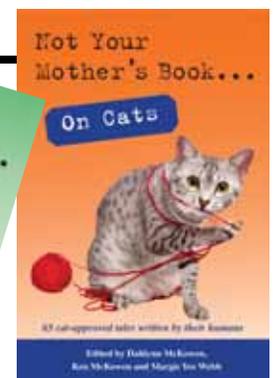
**NYMB...On Pets:** Need more stories on pot-belly pigs, llamas, warthogs, bearded dragons, skunks, ferrets and hedgehogs... or other pet stories. We have plenty of dog/cat stories for this book, but don't forget the deadline for *NYMB On Cats* is December 1st, as well. Info on the PS website.



### **Submit your pet stories NOW!**

**NYMB...On Being a Mom:** The manuscript has been delivered to Publishing Syndicate and is now going through our thorough pre-production process. Galleys anticipated to go out in mid-November. Release: March 2014

**NYMB...On Family:** The book is done! Release: March 2014



## SEND IN YOUR STORIES!

Updated 10/30/13

### *Not Your Mother's Book . . .*

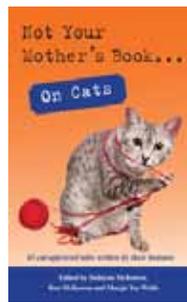
## A new anthology for a new century!

Stories needed for 30+ new books. Must be written by people age 18 and up. Details and submission guidelines on the PS website.

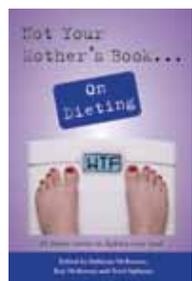
**HURRY! DEADLINES! HURRY!**



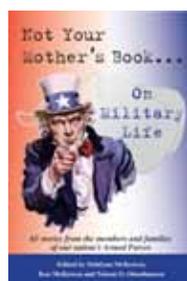
**On Pets:**  
Dec. 1, 2013



**On Cats:**  
Dec. 1, 2013



**On Dieting:**  
Mar. 1, 2014



**On Military Life:**  
June 1, 2014

**Submission guidelines at [www.PublishingSyndicate.com](http://www.PublishingSyndicate.com)**

### *OMG! My Reality! Youth Series*

## Time to get published!

We are accepting stories for four *OMG! My Reality!* titles: *Kids*; *Preteens*; and *Teens*. Stories must be written by those age 25 and younger. Please share this information with everyone. Thanks!



Do you know a teenager who loves to write? Tell him/her to submit stories to the upcoming *OMG! My Reality! For Teens*. **Being a published author is great for college and job applications.** With the fall 2013 release of *Stand Up!*, an anthology with stories from 75 of the nation's and world's most amazing young activists, we'll be swamped with even more submissions. So don't delay! Send now!

[www.PublishingSyndicate.com](http://www.PublishingSyndicate.com)

**Help young people become published authors!**



## *My Story is Out: High School Years*

Created by Lyndsey D'Arcangelo

***The nation's newest anthology for LGBT teens!***

We are looking for humorous, heart-warming, wistful and inspiring stories written by straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals **of all ages** about high school life. More info at [www.MyStoryIsOut.com](http://www.MyStoryIsOut.com).