Barbara M. Erb
For love of family and place
Barbara M. Erb: In Memoriam, April 17, 1924 – November 8, 2013

We are extremely saddened by the loss of Barbara Erb, and remain immensely grateful for the inspiring legacy that she and her late husband, Fred, have left to all those associated with the Institute and to the world at large. We remain indebted to this extraordinary couple for their uncommon vision and generous support, and will continue to draw on their example for inspiration for years to come.

All who had the fortune of knowing Barbara remarked on her passion for her family’s welfare and her keen desire to leave her grandchildren a better world than she inherited. She wanted to see the Great Lakes restored, especially Lake Huron, the lake on which the family cottage is located and was a tireless supporter of the culture and natural environment in Detroit and Michigan. She was always kind and gracious to those that met her.

The students, alumni, faculty, staff and other members of the Erb Institute community join her children Rick, Wendy, Leslie and John (and Debbie) and her grandchildren Mimi, Lark, and J. Hugh Liedtke and Elizabeth Erb in mourning.

Andy Hoffman,
Director and Faculty Professor, Erb Institute
Holcim (U.S.) Professor of Sustainable Enterprise
My heartfelt sympathy goes out to the entire Erb family. My deepest gratitude for the overwhelming support Barbara and Fred have provided to the Erb Institute. Truly an amazing gift that has positively impacted so many people, myself included.

*Mike Edison, Erb 2008*

My heartfelt sympathy goes out to the Erb family today. We here at the Erb Institute owe them a debt of gratitude that we can never truly repay. And yet what memories they left us to treasure! Barbara was a live wire, the type of woman who could and did still wear leather pants in her 80s. Back in 2009 we celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Institute at the Cranbrook School, which Fred had attended. Barbara was radiant that evening, and it was clear how much joy the Erb students had brought into her life, just as she had brought it into theirs. Giving and receiving are one in truth. Thank you Barbara.

*Tom Lyon,*
*Associate Director of Research, Erb Institute*
*Dow Chemical Professor of Sustainable Science, Technology and Commerce*
*Faculty Professor, Erb Institute*

The solitary bagpipe player crossed in front of the altar, strolled down toward the pews, and stepped into the congregation gathered to celebrate Barbara’s life. His Amazing Grace was taken up by the organ, and the scene was etched in our collective memory as an example of how Barbara and Fred’s vision created a global community inspired to make the world a better place. If impact is any measure of legacy, Barbara and Fred’s will be long lived.

*Terry Nelidov,*
*Managing Director, Erb Institute*
I am very sorry for your loss, and I send you my deepest sympathies. The Erb family has touched so many lives in the most remarkable ways. Every day I am grateful to Barbara’s and Fred’s foresight and vision. Your family has created remarkable reverberations through the sustainability community globally. There are innumerable examples of this that I can think of, where your family’s impact has been felt globally. For me, my University of Michigan experience begins, passes through, and continues on through the Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise. Thank you.

Gabriel Thoumi, Erb 2008

Very sincere condolences to the Erb family. My classmates and I are all incredibly grateful for Barbara’s (and Fred’s) vision and support of this great institute. It is a remarkable legacy, and one that has the power to benefit many. Best regards to the Erb family during this time.

Brian Rassel, Erb 2016

Barbara was such a lovely woman. There is a whole generation of us that will forever consider ourselves part of the wonderful Erb family that Barbara and Fred enabled with their generous gift. We are thinking of you and remembering Barbara fondly.

Stephanie Bertels, Erb Postdoc 2006-2008
We at the UM Water Center extend our sincere condolences to the amazing Erb family. We are so sorry for your loss of such an amazing person, mother, grandmother, and public servant. She and Fred were so inspirational and did so much good for so many it is both awe-inspiring and humbling. Barbara’s beauty inside and out radiate through her children and legacy and it is so wonderful that her influence will continue growing and giving – making this world a better place. We know she is so proud and smiling down on us all. Wishing you the best through the coming days.

*Allen Burton,*  
*Director, Water Center, University of Michigan*

My deepest sympathy to the Erb family. Barbara and her husband have contributed so much to the community, the environment, and the lives of so many individuals, young and old. The innovation, inspiration, and support have made it possible for an entire generation of thought leaders and sustainability professionals to make this world a better place.

*Don Scavia,*  
*Faculty Affiliate, Erb Institute*  
*Director, Graham Environmental Sustainability Institute*
Lake Huron
As an Erb alum who had the honor of knowing Barbara and Fred Erb, it was with great sadness that I read of Barbara’s passing. She was a wonderful role model for students and leaders alike, clearly demonstrating her values, commitment to the environment, and willingness to tackle tough challenges. Her contributions and influence live on in each of us.

Rebecca Nadel, Erb 2005

Barbara, along with Fred, were a “dynamic duo” who teamed to create the most amazing think tank, and do tank, in sustainable business — The Erb Institute for Sustainable Global Enterprise at the University of Michigan. Hundreds of business and NGO leaders and change agents have already been trained in this program, and through her and Fred’s generosity, hundreds more will be as well. While the family has my most sincere condolences for their second loss this year, in my heart is a strong sense of joy and gratitude for all the great work of Barbara on this earth. Her legacy is unique and far reaching.

Neil Hawkins,
Erb Strategic Advisory Council Chair
Vice President, Sustainability and EHS, Dow Chemical Company

As an Erb alum who had the honor of knowing Barbara and Fred Erb, it was with great sadness that I read of Barbara’s passing. She was a wonderful role model for students and leaders alike, clearly demonstrating her values, commitment to the environment, and willingness to tackle tough challenges. Her contributions and influence live on in each of us.

Rebecca Nadel, Erb 2005
I have fond memories of Barbara Erb especially during the formative years of the Erb Institute. She was a generous and enthusiastic partner with her husband, Fred in providing the cornerstone gifts that constitute the Institute’s permanent endowment.

She and Fred viewed the Erb students as the tangible legacy of their support. Barbara was always eager to meet with students to learn about their backgrounds. She loved to discuss how they planned to use their Michigan education to make an important difference in the world.

All of us associated with the Erb Institute are deeply grateful to Barbara and Fred for their infectious enthusiasm, bold vision and exceedingly generous support.

Frank Wilhelme
Assistant Dean (retired), Principal Gifts, Office of Development and Alumni Relations
My deepest condolences to the Erb family. As a current Erb student, I can attest to how significantly and tangibly Barbara’s commitment to the betterment of the world has impacted us. We’re grateful and wish you the best in this difficult time.

*Andrea Kraus, Erb 2016*

I am very proud to have the next stage in my professional life associated with the Erb family name and the great tradition and legacy they have established in the Erb Institute. Each day my appreciation grows for what Barbara and Fred have created and their family members should be very proud and congratulated for carrying on the tradition.

*Tom Catania,*  
*Executive-in-Residence, Erb Institute*

My sincerest condolences to the Erb family. The Institute remains a testament to the vision of both Fred and Barbara Erb. Each year the program grows into something more amazing than it was the year before. Thank you for helping me and many others pursue a path to improve the world around us.

*Sincerely,*  
*Richard Chandler, Erb 2004*
Isn’t it amazing how much one person can change the world? I did not know Barbara Erb personally, but she has left an indelible imprint on my life. Because of her generosity and vision I have spent the last three years becoming a lean, mean, sustainability machine. And I am not the only one. You can see her and Fred’s legacy in every Erber who has walked the halls at Michigan and who are now spread out around the globe like little seedlings sprouting between the cracks, ready to uproot the foundation, and remake our world. Barbara may have shuffled off this mortal coil, but her name – and her spirit – live on in all of us.

Adam Byrnes, Erb 2014

My gratitude for Fred and Barbara Erb is immeasurable. Their vision speaks every day through my words to students. What they allowed me to learn—to value—as an Erb doctoral fellow leaves an indelible mark on my teaching. Their support of sustainability education will influence more minds and actions than any one of us could ever live to see. They live on through the great work and great people that their generosity nurtures.

Rebecca Henn, Former Erb PhD student

As an “Erber,” I am so grateful for the vision and support from Barbara. Her commitment to making the world a better place lives on among all of us who are dedicating our studies and careers to positive social and environmental change. I am honored and proud to be a part of this community and family.

Emily Taylor, Erb 2014
Barbara and Fred Erb created a remarkable legacy in the Erb Institute, the many lives it has shaped and the new vision for environmental progress it helped to establish. Barbara and Fred were no longer directly involved with the Institute by the time I came on board, and I did not get to know them well; but I can think of no finer illustration of the Biblical phrase, “You shall know them by their fruits.” It has always been a great pleasure to know their family, and to benefit from the rich and warm environment they created in the Erb Institute.

My deepest condolences, and admiration for a life well-lived, go to the Erb family.

Rick Bunch,
Managing Director 2008-2013, Erb Institute

My deepest condolences to the Erb family and their friends. I am so very grateful for the legacy of Barbara and Fred. Their impact on UM continues to grow as more and more students, post-docs, and faculty benefit from their gifts and vision. The Erb post-doc was an incredible opportunity for me and I thank Barbara and Fred for their positive contribution to U of M. What a true Michigan family! I am sorry I never got to meet Barbara myself, but I am so glad that I was able to be part of her vision for the Erb Institute.

My thoughts are with her friends and family.

Sara Soderstrom, Erb Post-doc, 2010-2012
With deep sadness I offer my heartfelt condolences to the entire Erb family for the loss of Barbara. As the Director of the Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise during its formative years, I will fondly always remember the soul-warming conversations with Barbara and Fred concerning the fate of the world, love of children and grandchildren, and felt duties to ensure a sustainable world for future generations. Barbara’s love knew no distance over time and space. Her enthusiastic support for the family’s generous endowment of the Institute served to ensure that The University of Michigan will be preparing the sustainable leaders of the planet in perpetuity. What a noble, kind and glorious philanthropic legacy!!! All of these past, present and future leaders (globally known as “Erbers”) will be eternally grateful. Thank you Barbara (and of course Fred too) for being Heroes for the planet…and may future generations of your offspring remain eternally proud of your extraordinary generosity in changing the world for the better.

*All my love,*  
*Tom Gladwin*  
*Max McGraw Professor of Sustainable Enterprise*

My deepest condolences to the Erb family. Rest assured that Fred and Barbara’s legacy will continue to thrive.

*Hongda Jiang, Erb 2014*
I was very sorry to hear of Barbara Erb’s passing and offer my sympathies to the entire family. In reading about Barbara, I learned she was born in my same birthday month – April – exactly 60 years before me. She and I both developed our empathy for the planet through local natural beauty growing up – for her, the Great Lakes and for me, the Maine coast. Barbara knew that we needed to see time in terms of generations, not years or days, and made it reality by founding the Institute, where I learned that same principle. I truly hope my future continue to inspire similarities to Barbara, an amazing woman. The Erb Institute has been a life changing experience for me, and that is thanks to her.

*Emilia Sibley, Erb 2014*

I send my sincerest condolences to the Erb family. I cannot understate the impact that Barbara and Fred have had on me personally through their actions and the legacy they left behind. Their generosity, vision, and compassion live on through the Institute and community I am so fortunate to be a part of.

*Phel Meyer, Erb 2013*

What a privilege it was to interact with Barbara and Fred as an intern at the foundation during summer 2012. Barbara’s sharp mind and keen passion for the health of the Great Lakes made lasting impressions on me. I will forever remain grateful for impact of the Barbara and Fred’s generosity on my own life, both personal and professional. Barbara, thank you for your generous, beautiful life! You will be missed.

*Leah Zimmerman, Erb 2014*
My deepest sympathies to the Erb family for the passing of an inspirational and loving family member. I come to the end of my time with Erb, realizing what an absolute privilege it has been to be part of a thriving community of change agents that was created through the foresight of both Fred and Barb.

I only hope to live up to the example Barb set – dedicating her efforts to making a better future for both her family, her community and the world. Although I never had the pleasure to meet Barb personally, I feel like her generosity has become part of the fabric of who I am and what I’ll take with me into the future.

Barb, I will do everything I can to deliver on the vision you had for the world and all of us idealistic, passionate (and sometimes crazy) students looking to make a dent in this world. We need more women like you leading the charge to value the people and world around us.

*Sabrina Sullivan, Erb 2014*

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My sincere condolences to the Erb family. The legacy left by Barbara and Fred and the community they created is unparalleled. I feel truly privileged to be a part of this community.

*Wes Allred, Erb 2014*

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I send my deepest condolences to the Erb family for their loss. While I am still so new to this incredible community, I am forever grateful to Barbara and Fred for building the foundation from which so many of us will venture into the world to uphold our shared beliefs and dreams. Barbara and Fred were integral to each other’s vision and their love and tenacity created a space for all of us to aspire to greater things from our careers and how we will exist in this world. I am so fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with them even if briefly. Barbara you have left an indelible mark on all our lives through your love and dedication to your family, your husband and your community.

*Much love,*

*Martha Campbell, Erb 2013*