

Congressman Ronnie Shows
Mississippi's 4th Congressional District

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For Immediate Release

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Congressman Shows Will Make These Remarks on Tuesday, July 24, 2001

Congressman Ronnie Shows Talks about Eudora Welty
Famed Mississippi Writer Passes Away - Shows Remembers Impact

Mr. Speaker, today I stand before you, my colleagues and the American people with sad news. One of our nation's greatest writers has passed away. Yesterday, Eudora Welty died. Miss Eudora lived in my district down in Jackson. Miss Eudora will always live, Mr. Speaker, in the hearts of thousands around our planet who have read her words discovering a world of penetrating thought, stark memories and prose that can bring the angels to earth and soothe our longings to connect with our broader world.

Eudora Welty grew up in Jackson, Mississippi. She spent her entire life living and writing in Jackson. But, her words were and are universal. Miss Eudora knew her home and she could pen her thoughts in way that made the South and Mississippi a place in all our hearts. One can not begin to adequately address how she could make us feel, euphoric at once and then again nostalgic and magic.

Miss Eudora wrote about a "sense of place". Who we are and how our world, the dirt, people around us, the humidity and the community made us unique. She made us remember home and she led us to realize the good and the bad in our society. And for this, we could read and learn and strive to be better.

Eudora Welty won a Pulitzer Prize in 1973 for *The Optimist's Daughter*. She was also the recipient of the National Medal for Literature in 1980 and a National Medal of Arts in 1987. Her work is recognizable by nearly everyone: *A Curtain of Green*, *The Wide Net*, *The Robber Bridegroom*, *Ponder Heart* and *Delta Wedding* to name only a few. Her work to this day is widely published in French and other languages as well as English.

Miss Eudora experienced and saw her world, the American South of the 20th Century, with a keen eye and ready pen. She put her feelings and observations on paper in what can only be described as brilliance. A reader of a Welty piece is forever changed - forever touched by the human experience. Eudora Welty took on life with a zeal for the truth and she took the truth and made it real on paper. Miss Eudora was born in 1909 and was educated at the Mississippi State College for Women, now the Mississippi University for Women, and the University of Wisconsin. She lived through the Great Depression snapping black and white photographs of Mississippi scenes for President Roosevelt's WPA. She experienced World War II, the economic expansion of the 1950's, the change of the 1960's, and continued through the 1970's, '80's, and '90's until she passed away yesterday, July 23, 2001.

So much history and change occurred during this remarkable life. But Miss Eudora, through it all, realized that

the human experience remained, well human. She saw the pain and the triumph, the celebration and the agony. And Miss Eudora has given us the great gift of place and memory and humanity.

Miss Eudora was an icon. She, through her grace, gentleness and greatness has given so many Mississippians a role model. Miss Eudora, through her life and writings, has given thousands a kind of tacit permission to strive for their dreams.

I think Eudora Welty allowed us to embrace our Southernness in the context of being a member of the entire American family. In her prose, Miss Eudora was honest about herself and her culture. Yet while embracing the truth, she made us proud of our accomplishments, our potential and ourselves. She was a visionary who could make the past alive and relevant while caring for the people and events of the present.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think her curtain of green has closed with her passing, but rather has opened. It has opened wide so that all of us can continue to embrace the characters, places and events she told us about. The curtain of green is open wide for us today as it will be for countless generations to come.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

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