

*Remarks for the
Media Preview of Eudora Welty Exhibit
April 5, 2002*

Thank you, Jack. It is a pleasure to be here to help open the “Passionate Observers” exhibit. Through the camera lens of our own Eudora Welty and other artists of the 1930’s, we see a unique view of American life during a time of extreme hardship.

The impact of Eudora Welty on our state and on our world is difficult to measure. Her words carried us – through her imagination and through ours – to another time and place, a time and place familiar to us as Mississippians.

Millions around the world have absorbed her powerful works and her complete mastery of language. With the opening of this exhibit today, we will absorb her mastery of the visual image as well.

The connection between her writing and her photography was strong. With each, she used her pen and her eye to capture a unique vision of Mississippi and of America – a vision focused on the people, the characters and the environments that have shaped us.

There's something about the black and white photographs taken by Welty that speaks even more deeply. Perhaps it is because of the times and the conditions affecting the people.

It was once said that photographing in color shows the color of the clothes; photographing in black and white shows the color of the soul.

Eudora Welty – on the page and in the picture – captured our souls.

I wonder what else she might have had to show us, had she not left her camera sitting on a bench in Paris. Her frustration at this act resulted in her not replacing her camera; how much more could she have shown us about our world?

It's been nearly nine months since Eudora Welty died – but, her work lives on. In timeless words and photographs, her work lives on.

I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of today's preview, and to celebrate one of Mississippi's greatest daughters. Thank you.