

Eudora Welty

Born (1909) and bred in Jackson, Mississippi, Eudora Welty lived in Jackson most of her life. In 1925 she enrolled for two years at the Mississippi State College for Women, then transferred to the University of Wisconsin. After obtaining an undergraduate degree in English literature there, she went to New York where she studied advertising at Columbia University. It was during the height of the Great Depression, however, and she had to struggle to find work in the Big Apple.

So Welty returned to Jackson. In 1936 she saw her 'The Death of a Traveling Salesman' published in the literary magazine *Manuscript*. She followed up with several more stories that appeared in such notable publications as the *New Yorker*. She next wrote her first book, a collection of short stories entitled *A Curtain of Green*, then traveled to Europe, where she spent some time as a resident lecturer at Oxford and Cambridge. She returned to Jackson, where she churned out an impressive array of narratives. Many were made into Broadway plays. Her personal favorite, a 1949 collection of interrelated stories entitled *The Golden Apples*, was set in the fictional town of Morgana, Mississippi. In 1971 she published a collection of photographs depicting the Great Depression. Entitled *One Time, One Place*, her heart-wrenching photographs of scenes from Depression-era Mississippi captured the intense pride that exists among even the poorest of our citizens. Her story, *The Optimist's Daughter*, won for Eudora the Pulitzer Prize for Literature in 1973.

If you've ever sat in on a conference where influential individuals with differing views debate certain matters, then you know why they rarely get accomplished. Welty understood things, however, and got them done. In simple terms: she had her act together. She believed in the beauty and the healing power of the South. Welty not only had a comprehensive view of Southern life, but of human relationships in general.

Eudora Welty died at Jackson's Baptist Medical Center in July of 2001.

Essay by Bill Lounsbery

KRL has many books by Eudora Welty, including essays, stories and photographs.

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