

Governor's Column – 12/30/01

This is the time of year when newspapers, magazines and television all tend to reflect on the past year – the events that have marked the year, the passing of noted individuals, and the popular trends in fashion and music.

To be sure, there is much for us to remember from 2001.

Many of the memories are happy ones. Teachers across the state were assured of our commitment to pay them as the professionals they are, following a special session of the Legislature in July. King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain paid a royal visit to open the “Majesty of Spain” exhibit. Construction on the Nissan plant offered proof positive that Mississippi is just as competitive as any other state.

There are difficult memories as well. Families in Pontotoc and Madison will never forget the fatal storms of February and November. Flooding across the state damaged homes and property. And unfortunately, the job of creating new congressional districts could not be completed in the Capitol and instead headed for the courtroom.

We said good-bye to some great Mississippians. Eudora Welty and John Lee Hooker carried the influence of our literature and music far beyond our state lines. Glen Deweese, Sam Wright and Clyde Woodfield served in the Legislature to improve the quality of life within our borders. There are hundreds of others, known to their families and friends, who made their own special contributions to their communities and those around them.

Like those who remember Pearl Harbor or the assassination of John F. Kennedy, we will always remember where we were and what we were doing the fateful morning of September 11. On that day, our world changed in so many ways. We now face greater security in airports, public buildings and many places where a threat never seemed

possible. We look at everything with a stronger sense of caution. We rally around the flag more eagerly and pray for peace more often.

The tragedies of that day will never be erased from our memories, and we should be proud of the service of so many Mississippians in our armed forces, as well as those in law enforcement and emergency agencies, who are working to prevent such tragedies from happening again.

It is good for us to reflect on the days and events of this past year, but it is also important to look forward to the dreams and challenges of the year to come.

Mississippi is, in so many ways, “America’s state of promise.” We are blessed with good people, good resources and good hearts. The combination of these three blessings gives us the tools to create our own opportunities.

That’s the challenge we face in the coming year.

We have shown ourselves to be up to this challenge. We have continued to recruit new business and retain existing businesses during difficult times. The work we do when times are tough helps determine the prosperity we enjoy during the good times.

Other issues such as education, health care and public safety will continue to be at the forefront of our efforts as well. The work we do in just the next few months will affect the lives we live in the next few years. Again, we have the tools to get this work done.

It’s been said that “history balances the frustration of ‘how far we have to go’ with the satisfaction of ‘how far we have come.’” We have indeed come a long way and accomplished great things in the past year. Let’s not let frustration hold us back from the work of the year to come.