

March 1, 2001 marked a historical day for the State of Mississippi. The Majesty of Spain exhibit, one of the most beautiful and exclusive exhibits in the world, premiered a royal collection of Spanish treasures to the people of Mississippi. Not only has this exhibit benefited people across our state through increased tourism dollars and expanded educational opportunities, but it has also helped us cross national and international boundaries to bring the people of the United States and Spain together in a cultural exchange that could strengthen our ties in the future.

Mississippi is the first and only state to display these historical artifacts, which had never before left the boundaries of Spain. Another first for the State of Mississippi happened when for the first time reigning monarchs visited Mississippi. King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia, of Spain, came to Mississippi to experience the exhibit first hand. Queen Sofia was very impressed with the exhibit, and Mississippi received the King and Queen's royal stamp of approval.

Visitors to the State Capitol welcomed the King and Queen with banners and cheers. Governor and Mrs. Musgrove escorted King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia into the Capitol for a reception with statewide elected officials and legislators where the governor presented gifts to the king and queen on behalf of the people of Mississippi.

"Your Majesties, we want you to remember your visit to Mississippi fondly," said Governor Musgrove as he presented them with a bronze sculpture by the late Mississippi artist, Bruce Brady, titled "Bluesman", which depicts Mississippi's heritage as the birthing ground for the soulful poet-musicians who brought us the blues. "Mississippians have been influenced for many years by blues music, and it is deeply rooted in our culture," said the Governor. A music collection by Mississippi artists was presented to Queen Sofia along with a beautiful box hand crafted of native Mississippi walnut wood by Mississippian Fletcher Cox.

We value our history and the historical aspect of this event. Mississippi's history is full of touches from Spain. "We have embraced this opportunity to open the doors of Spain to visitors from around the world right here in Mississippi, and we are opening the doors to more cultural opportunities," said the Governor. "This is Mississippi's chance to provide an actual "living exhibit" for the world to experience." Our entire state will serve as a classroom as tourists visit the exhibit. The Majesty of Spain Exhibit will remain in Mississippi until September 3, 2001 and will be viewed by people across the country and around the world.