

The Cadence

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Celebrating 125 Years of Excellence

BILL USERY - AN EXTRAORDINARY CITIZEN

In 1956, the young Bill Usery was a newly installed representative of the International Association of Machinists, assigned to investigate the potential for the organization at the then-unknown but growing missile test site of Cape Canaveral, Florida. Although he was initially skeptical, Usery's military and civilian contacts convinced him that the future of the Cape was extremely bright. The Russian launch of Sputnik 1 the following year confirmed Usery's judgment, as the United States was plunged into a space race that would make the Cape a center of the nation's commitment to ballistic missile and space technology.

President Kennedy accelerated that race with his commitment to land a man on the moon and return him safely to the earth. In furtherance of that goal, Kennedy issued an executive order creating a national Missile Sites Commission, which had separate committees at various space-related facilities around the country, and whose mission was to minimize conflicts and settle labor disputes. Usery's work on behalf of the Machinists led to his appointment as Chairman of the Cape Canaveral Missile Sites Committee. The Committee worked to find ways for all the parties working at the Cape - the employees, the unions, the various contractors, and the government - to find ways to work together to resolve disputes and prevent work stoppages. The Committee's work was critical to the success of the Cape's mission.

Usery's appointment to the Committee was also a defining moment in his life, as it was the first of many opportunities

Usery would later receive to work at the highest levels of government, on behalf of the working people of America. He would go on to receive five presidential appointments, three of which required confirmation by the Senate, including Secretary of Labor under President Ford, and to become known as the nation's top industrial mediator. His career in

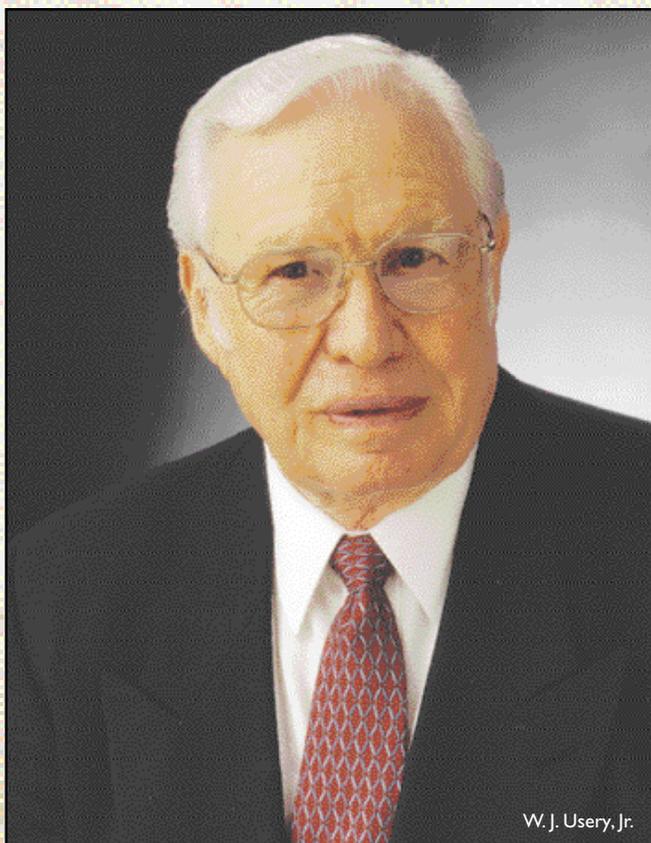
government, the private sector, and the academic world has (so far) spanned five decades, and shows no sign of slowing down.

Born in Hardwick, Georgia, during the lean Depression years, young W. J. "Bill" Usery, Jr., understood the power of resourcefulness and tenacity at an early age. Usery attributes much of his patriotism and love of freedom to his experiences at GMC, which he attended from 1938 to 1941, and to his time in the U. S. Navy, which he joined shortly after graduation. Usery served in the Pacific Fleet during World War II, and saw firsthand the devastating effects on working people of repressive regimes.

After leaving the Navy in 1946, Usery found employment as a

machinist, but also found that employees' rights were sometimes threatened or denied even in a free society such as ours. He quickly assumed a leadership position in the local union, and his ability led to an eventual position as a Grand Lodge Representative for the International Association of Machinists. It was in that connection that he found himself at Cape Canaveral.

Above all, Usery believed that freedom and responsibility go



W. J. Usery, Jr.

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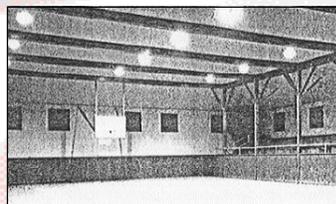
1925

A Junior School building now known as Jenkins Hall erected.



1926

A gymnasium named for Judge John Allen, chairman of Board of Trustees, built with funds donated by alumni.



1928

George S. Roach becomes President.

1929

General Assembly approves adding two years of college instruction at GMC. College classes begin with 1931-32 school term.

together, and that unionism and responsible collective bargaining must also go together. These principles, which served him so well at the Cape, also led to his recognition by the incoming Nixon Administration in 1969. Usery was appointed by President Nixon as Assistant Secretary of Labor and, in addition thereto, was later appointed Special Assistant to the President.

Usery quickly became one of the country's most important actors in the field of labor-management relations and dispute resolution, becoming involved in virtually every significant national industrial dispute from 1969 to 1977. His success as a mediator led to his appointment in 1973 by President Nixon as National Director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, and in 1976 by President Ford as Secretary of Labor.

When President Ford left office in 1977, Usery formed his own company, Bill Usery Associates, Inc., based in Washington, DC. He is still very much in demand, and continues to be available as a consultant and special mediator when U.S. presidents and others seek help in resolving labor conflicts. He was called upon by President Clinton to serve on the Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations from 1993 to 1995, and also served as special mediator for the Major League Baseball dispute in 1994.

Usery's impact on American collective bargaining and labor-management relations has been tremendous. As former President George Bush remarked:

"Collective bargaining is recognized as the cornerstone of American labor relations, thanks to the hard work and decisive leadership of people like Bill. By promoting cooperation and dialogue between management and labor, Bill Usery has helped to strengthen our entire nation."

But Bill Usery's work has also extended beyond our own shores, to the sphere of international labor relations. Such international involvement actually began more than thirty years ago. He had just begun his federal service in 1969 as Assistant Secretary of Labor, when he was selected by Secretary of Labor George Shultz to represent the Department of Labor at a Ministerial Meeting of the Paris-



Pictured in GMC dress uniform, Mr. Usery was a member of the Class of 1940.

based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The ministers decided they needed an Industrial Relations Working Party, to share information, establish standards, and promote free and responsible collective bargaining in OECD countries. Usery was nominated by then-Secretary of State William Rogers as chairman of the new Working Party, and was approved by the OECD governing body. He continued for several years in that important position, helping advise the world's leading industrial nations on their labor-management policies.

Usery's interest and involvement in the international realm continued after his departure from government service. Two examples stand out.

In 1983, Usery was called upon by General Motors and Toyota to help work out an unprecedented labor agreement for a proposed Joint Venture between the two giant international automakers. The plan called for the re-

Duty Honor Country-125-Character Above All

1931

American Legion erects a memorial gate and builds a wall around Davenport Field in memory of those who died in World War I.

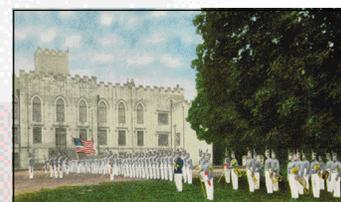


1931

GMC eliminated from State budget.

1932

Ranking of Distinguished Honor School achieved by ROTC.



1934

Female students excluded from Georgia Military College.

opening of an old GM plant in Fremont, California, using American workers and Japanese management to manufacture a high-quality compact car. One of the biggest obstacles, however, was the reluctance of Toyota to hire the plant's former employees, who had a terrible reputation, as part of the new work force, and to operate under an American-style collective bargaining agreement.

Usery was called upon to work out a new understanding among the parties regarding hiring, training, work organization, and union recognition. After grueling negotiations and numerous setbacks, a Memorandum of Understanding was worked out which allowed for a highly innovative approach to labor-management relations, based on mutual trust, at the new Joint Venture, which was officially named New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc. (NUMMI). NUMMI became enormously successful, producing some of the country's highest quality vehicles, and becoming a model for collaborative labor-management relations in other plants in the U.S. and in other countries.

Toyota's former president and chairman, Eiji Toyoda, praised Usery's finesse and professionalism in a letter written 15 years later, after the success of NUMMI was firmly established:

"I personally believe you [were] the first person in the U.S. who understood and vigorously advocated the concept of mutual trust and respect between labor and management."

While the NUMMI experiment was being successfully implemented in the late 1980's and early 90's, Usery turned his attention to another part of the world: the former Soviet Union and, in particular, Russia and Ukraine. The coal industry in these countries was in big trouble. Once the world's fourth largest coal producer, Russia and her mining companies were plagued by a high rate of work-related accidents and deaths. Workers were striking for decent wages and better conditions, continually bringing operations to a paralyzing halt. Labor reform and a complete restructuring of the industry were essential to positioning the New Independent States of Russia as a viable contender in the global free market economy.

In June 1991, Bill Usery led a high-level tripartite group from the U.S. coal industry, labor, and government in visiting

Moscow and the coal fields of Siberia and Ukraine. From that visit, the group concluded that, even with widespread support for change and economic reform, the problems facing Russia's coal industry were monumental. Massive infusions of technology, managerial expertise, and capital would be required to convert the industry into a modern, self-sustaining enterprise.

As a result of Usery's initiative, the group established Partners in Economic Reform (PIER), a non-profit entity that worked tirelessly over a two-year period to secure the participation of the U.S. Departments of State, Labor, and Commerce for its main initiative, the "Coal Project." The Bill Usery Labor Management Relations Foundation pitched in with a much-needed \$50,000 initial grant. PIER then successfully solicited the help of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Bank and various corporations and other entities to help fund the project.

The eventual result: a thriving coal industry in Russia, and an opportunity to boost American involvement and assistance in Russia's new government. When reform in the Russian coalfields was well underway, then-President Bill Clinton penned a letter to Usery, thanking him for PIER's efforts:

"A productive and prosperous Russia can add billions of dollars in new growth to the global economy. We are investing not only in the future of Russia, but in the future of America."

Today, Usery concentrates most of his effort on the Usery Center for the Workplace, which was established in his honor at Georgia State University in 1997. The Center promotes innovative approaches to worker-management relations and dispute resolution. Its recent projects have focused on workforce development, productivity and quality improvement, research on trade and outsourcing, labor law, and global leadership training. Usery has also donated the official papers that chronicle his illustrious career to the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State.

Although Usery has received numerous accolades and awards in the course of his career, including five honorary doctorates, he considers it his highest honor to have received from Georgia Military College not only the Distinguished Alumni

1934

J. H. Jenkins becomes President.

1935

GMC men allowed to sing with world famous A Cappella Choir from the Georgia State College for Women.



1935

The Campus Theater debuted a "moving picture with sound" outlining the activities of GMC that would be shown in Martin Theaters in Georgia and Alabama.

1938

Enrollment in Junior College is 139 students, 62 from foreign countries.

Award in 1971 but also GMC's greatest tribute, the Carl Vinson Public Service Award, in 1990.

At GMC, Usery experienced an extraordinary level of national pride and self-discipline, and was able to observe and practice the exemplary leadership skills that would serve him well throughout his life. The student body's ethnic and economic diversity also gave him the opportunity to experience life from a perspective outside his own rural south.

GMC reinforced the upbringing Usery had already been given by parents who wholeheartedly believed in their nation and in community service. Usery came from a town which one of Georgia's most famous congressional representatives, Carl Vinson, called home. He knew from an early age that the GMC experience was a special one, that he should not take for granted.

Of Usery's contributions to the school, Major General Peter J. Boylan, USA (Ret.), GMC President, has written:

"Every educational institution in this land has alumni to whom it can point with pride as exemplifying those qualities which identify the school and the ethic which underpins the education it provides. In the case of Bill Usery, these [qualities] are gifts to our country of an extraordinary sort from an extraordinary citizen."

Perhaps the most succinct and fitting tribute to the life and successes of Bill Usery was published more than 25 years ago in the Congressional Record, by Congressman John Erlenborn of Illinois, on the occasion of Usery's stepping down from the position of Secretary of Labor. The Congressman wrote:

"Mr. Speaker, let us consider this remarkable story.

"In the 1930's, we have a young man in a small town in Georgia - a boy without political connections, without family influence, with

nothing but the opportunity to do as well as he was able.

"Forty years later we find the same boy, long since a man, in the Cabinet of the President of the United States, a position he has earned by his own extraordinary abilities; a position he received although he had always been a member of the opposing political party and made no secret about it.

"Mr. Speaker, I wish that the simple, unadorned story of W. J. Usery, Jr. could be told, without dramatics or moralistic trimmings, to every schoolchild in America.

"It is truly the American story, as true now as it was 200 years ago, and an inspiration to us all. For that alone we should wish Bill Usery good wishes and godspeed."

As is evident in his accomplishments and the admiration of those who have known and worked with him, Bill Usery has truly maintained "Character Above All."



In 1944, Mr. Usery (right) with friend, Tony Ruthland, was stationed in Tallaga Bay aboard the U.S.S. Tutuila.

Duty, Honor Country-125-Character Above All

1939

With help from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Whitfield Hall is constructed and a classroom building attached to front of the Allen Gym.



1939

Civilian pilot training added to curriculum. GMC is only school in nation to have 100% enrolled students pass ground and flight testing.



1939

Total school income is \$29,456 and total expense is \$28,555 for the fiscal year.