

Force Base continues to seek MERC's unique expertise and essential engineering skills, but is forced to pass money through small and large businesses to MERC adding time and cost to the product/service delivery. By demanding more awards go to small businesses, the government also suffers a loss of intellectual property, IP, since MERC transfers ownership of all said property back to the U.S. Government, while small businesses can retain IP for future revenue.

You would be hard pressed to find any bigger supporter of small businesses in the Senate than myself. However, when it comes to ensuring our men and women fighting overseas for our freedom have what they need to get the job done, there are only three things I care about: cost, schedule, and performance. Our men and women in uniform deserve that.

In this era of defense spending austerity, the Air Force can ill afford the unintended consequences of precluding entities that supply vital complex engineering solutions, along with the added benefit of cross pollination of educational experience between government employees, both civilian and military, and the best in the academic engineering community, from receiving business simply to meet a set-aside quota.

This issue is about ensuring Robins Air Force Base maintains essential engineering capabilities to supplement their own and their ability to swiftly and inexpensively select the most capable organization to provide the best product or service at the best value to the government. The Small Business Office at Warner Robins, in their attempt to carry out the Air Forces' broader goal of increasing small businesses participation, is jeopardizing the very survival of institutions provided for and protected by the FAR.

By selectively applying the FAR exceptions, the Air Force is ignoring the intent of the acquisition regulations. It is certain to destroy these few vital educational links between academic institutions and government engineers that need that level of expertise. More importantly, by ignoring FAR Exception Three, the government is limiting its ability to pursue the best solutions at the best price. We can ill-afford such consequences in this period of economic austerity, simply in the name of fostering the growth of small businesses.

I was encouraged in September when the Air Force took a step in the right direction with their approval of a Justification and Approval, J&A, for the use of other than full and open competition for an engineering, research and development contract in support of technologies and methodologies applicable to aging aircraft and support equipment. The contract will maintain essential engineering, research, and development capabilities at Robins AFB through support provided by MERC.

I am hopeful this recent development is indicative of a new way of doing

business at Warner Robins. In case it is not, I urge my colleagues here in the Senate to remain vigilant in their oversight responsibilities, and I renew my call to the Secretary of the Air Force to ensure local commands apply the FAR as written so as to guarantee our men and women in uniform have exactly what they need, when they need it, and at a price that is in keeping with our responsibilities as stewards of the American tax dollar.●

REMEMBERING MARY ANN MOBLEY

● Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, my State has lost one of our finest citizens. Mary Ann Mobley, a friend to many and one of our best known Mississippians, passed away Tuesday. Mary Ann was the first young woman from Mississippi to be crowned Miss America, an accomplishment that was a source of great pride to my State. I got to know Mary Ann at the University of Mississippi, where she was really a superstar and a fine actress. Incidentally, we were cast in a University Players production of "Tiger at the Gates" at Ole Miss. She made Mississippians proud of her success as an entertainer in Hollywood and a person who kept our State close to her heart throughout her career.

I ask unanimous consent that a December 11, 2014, article from the Clarion-Ledger newspaper titled "Mary Ann Mobley 'never forgot her roots'" be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Clarion-Ledger, Dec. 11, 2014]

MARY ANN MOBLEY 'NEVER FORGOT HER ROOTS'

(By Billy Watkins)

They danced in the streets of Brandon the night one of their own, Mary Ann Mobley, was crowned the 1959 Miss America.

"That's not just a saying, that's a fact," said Waymon Tigrett, 70, who grew up with Mobley and has owned Brandon Discount Drugs the past 46 years. "They put a jukebox out by the statue in the middle of Main Street, ran an extension cord out to it and that thing blared music all night. People danced and carried on for hours. It was a true celebration.

"You have to remember, Brandon was only about 2,000 people back then. It was a small, isolated town. And all of a sudden, a girl we all know is on television and winning Miss America. That was a huge deal back then. And still is to us."

Mobley, Mississippi's first Miss America, died Tuesday after a long battle with breast cancer. She was 77.

Services will be 1 p.m. Monday at Christ United Methodist Church in Jackson. Visitation will be Sunday from 4-6 p.m. at Parkway Funeral Home in Ridgeland.

Mobley won the crown in September 1958, the same year she graduated from the University of Mississippi.

"She never forgot her roots, where she came from," said Tigrett, who lived four houses down from Mobley on what is known now as Mary Ann Drive. "Rankin County used to own Rankin General Hospital, and we had a big benefit every year, Affair of the

Heart, to raise money for it. Mary Ann would come back from Hollywood and emcee it.

"She remembered everybody. She treated us just the same. She never got too big for us. She was the same girl who used to ride palomino horses in the pasture behind her house."

Judy Trott, former dean of students at Ole Miss, said Mobley "was always generous with her time when it came to Ole Miss."

"She would come back and oversee the Miss University pageant—the one she won to send her to Miss America—and the Parade of Beauties, another pageant that we still hold," she said.

Trott wasn't surprised Mobley went on to become a popular film and TV actress.

"Mary Ann was groomed for it," she said. "She had great talent, a great voice. Her mother would often come to pageants up here with her, and she was outgoing and bubbly. I guess that's where Mary Ann got her personality."

"I remember after one of the pageants taking Mary Ann and her mother down to the Holka, a place you could get cake and coffee. We were in there for three hours that night. It wasn't just the students talking to Mary Ann, it was Mary Ann talking to the students. She was interested in them, wanted to know their plans, their goals. She was extremely warm and outgoing. It was easy to love her."

Hometown friends, saddened by her death, quietly reminisced Wednesday.

Mobley not only battled breast cancer in recent years but suffered carpal tunnel syndrome in both hands and arms. Emails became shorter as every letter of every word required effort.

Phone calls to check on the people of her hometown also became shorter, but no more infrequent. If the conversation ever turned toward her own problems, Mobley would laugh and find a way to quickly change the subject.

Some of the memories stirred laughter. Such as the time Mobley was to perform at Brandon High School but the family car wouldn't crank. Her mother saddled a horse for the 5-mile ride, and she and Mary Ann made it there in time.

And the night Brandon folks danced in the street, the celebration spread to the capital city. A few town residents decided it would be a good idea to take the volunteer fire department's truck and drive it up and down Jackson's Capitol Street with the siren blaring. Jackson police eventually tired of the racket and impounded the truck.

Mobley also became a filmmaker, producing documentaries in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and the Sudan.

Mobley's husband of 45 years, TV personality Gary Collins, died in 2012. The couple had one daughter, Clancy Collins-White.

Collins-White phoned friends Tuesday in Brandon to tell them of Mobley's death.

Three other Mississippians have won the Miss America crown: Lynda Lee Mead of Natchez, 1960; Cheryl Prewitt of Ackerman, 1980; and Susan Akin of Meridian, 1986.●

RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL FINALS RODEO

● Mr. HELLER. Madam President, today I wish to recognize the annual National Finals Rodeo, which takes place at the Thomas & Mack Center on the campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The National Finals Rodeo has been held in Las Vegas for the past 30 years of the event's 55 year history. Often noted as the foremost