

**CALIFORNIA ORTHOPAEDIC ASSOCIATION
TRIBUTE TO COA FOUNDER - BLAIR FILLER
MAY 21, 2023**

- Slide 1 It is an honor to be here today and to share with you my experience with a colleague of mine, Blair Filler. I first met Blair about 25 years ago. I was a young orthopaedist then. I was in my early 40s, and Blair was in his early 70s. At that time, there was no Leadership Fellows Program, and if you wanted to get involved in orthopaedics, you had to find a mentor who would help you along, put you under their shoulder, and show you the ropes, and for me, Blair was that person. I was blessed to get a call from his daughter on April 29th when he passed, and his service was the week after.
- Slide 2 I attended his Celebration of Life at his home on May 6th of 2023. That's his home. That's a view from his backyard from Rolling Hills.
- Slide 3 So, he met his wife, Dodie, when he was in college. They seated them alphabetically, and they were seated next to each other. He played dumb and he didn't have a pencil, and things went on from there. They were married for 67 years. They had four children. He was known by his grandchildren as Silly Papa and he was known by my children as Silly Papa, and he had great, great and I think he may have had great, great, great grandchildren. That's what happens when you live a long time as the Fillers do.
- Slide 4 Blair was always up for commitment and excitement. As soon as he graduated from high school and he became of age, he wanted to join the Navy. He wanted to be of service and see excitement. Blair was not the biggest guy in the world. He was always thin, and he did not meet the weight requirements. So, in order to qualify for the Navy, he ate bananas and he put rocks in his underwear. He wanted to see excitement and service. I think he saw the kitchen and evidently he peeled onions and potatoes.
- Slide 5 Blair believed that you should live life to the fullest and never stop learning, and I think we're gonna see that that's what Blair did.
- Slide 6 Blair had a lot of talents. He is a musician. He was accomplished on the banjo. He was a singer.
- Slide 7 Blair was athletic. In his 40s, he started running. He ran over 50 marathons. They found his running logs after he passed, and they had running logs going back for 50 years. He motivated many colleagues to run which, I believe, is helpful for their health, and he was the first organizer of our 5K run which we had yesterday morning. So, that's a big one.
- Slide 8 Blair was an avid skier. He had a place in Mammoth. He would take his

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children and family up there. He would also go heliskiing in the Canadian Rockies.

Slide 9 Blair enjoyed backpacking in the Sierras, canoeing in Alaska, and scuba diving in Baja Peninsula.

Slide 10 In his 70s, he and his wife summited Mt. Kilimanjaro. So, he continued to be active in his life.

Slide 11 They traveled together to over 100 countries.

Slide 12 He was a pilot. This is his plane. It is a six-passenger plane. He would put his four kids in the plane, and they would fly all over the place. They went frequently to Mammoth. They flew as far as Alaska, Florida, New York, and Cozumel, and as one of his children pointed out, there's no toilet in that airplane.

Slide 13 He was a member of the sheriff search and rescue crew, and he did that for many years, and sometimes that has privilege. He was evidently traveling in Europe with Herb Stark and Milan Stevanovic, and they were pulled over by the officers in Italy, and one of his colleagues was in the process of being arrested, and Blair pulled out his sheriff's badge and suggested that maybe they did not want to arrest the friend of an American sheriff and they were quickly released.

Slide 14 Blair was an orthopaedic overachiever. According to Jim Luk, Blair was an officer in more orthopaedic organizations than anyone else. So, here are few of his awards through the years.

Slide 15 He was the founding member of this organization. He was a past president. He was a long-term board member, and I think we would all agree his most important accomplishment here was not starting COA but hiring Diane.

Slide 16 & A few more accomplishments through the years, never ending.
Slide 17

Slide 18 Blair had a wish. Blair wanted to die at home. He wanted to be carried out feet first. His wife passed about a year earlier. The last year was very hard, but his final wish did come true. He died at home. He died with all of his children around him, and he died peacefully. So, this is his home. That's his family and a couple of pictures.

Slide 19 I found this quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The purpose of life is to be

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useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, and to make a difference that you have lived and lived well.” And, Blair, I think you did that. Thank you for being a role model. Thank you for being a colleague. Thank you for being a friend.

Thanks for asking me to be here.

Tye J Ouzounian, MD

TJO / CAC