

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William Blair, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Blair, William, 1921-2014
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with William Blair, Jr.,
Dates:	May 2, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:25:11).
Abstract:	Baseball player and newspaper publisher William Blair, Jr. (1921 - 2014) pitched for the Indianapolis Clowns and other Negro League baseball teams during the late 1940s. He also founded Elite News, an important Dallas-Fort Worth area black newspaper, and launched in Dallas the first Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Parade. Blair was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 2, 2006, in Dallas, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_085
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Baseball player and newspaper publisher William Blair, Jr., was born on October 17, 1921. A former Negro League baseball player turned newspaper publisher, Blair has been a community voice in Dallas for over forty years. Blair attended Booker T. Washington High School and Prairie View A&M University. After six months at Prairie View A&M, Blair enlisted in the United States Army and became the youngest black first sergeant in the United States Army during World

War II.

Blair, a Negro League Baseball Museum inductee, pitched from 1946 to 1951 for the Indianapolis Clowns and other Negro League baseball teams. His baseball career included pitching a no-hitter in the *Denver Post* Tournament, playing with the late Winfield Welch, Jesse “Hoss” Walker, and Buster Haywood, and touring with Jesse Owens and the Harlem Globetrotters. Blair was instrumental in the development of the African American Museum’s Texas Sports Hall of Fame and serves on its advisory board. He was inducted in 1996 as a member of its inaugural class.

Blair founded the *Highlight News* (1947-1957). He also later founded the *Southwest Sports News*, a newspaper that specialized in publishing scores from Black college games throughout the United States. The paper was renamed *The Elite News* in 1960. One of the most influential black newspapers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, *Elite News* created “The Elite News Awards Night,” which was the first African American awards ceremony in Dallas when it began in 1975.

Blair had been a civil rights activist for more than six decades. In 1986, Blair launched the first Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Parade, and this parade is now an institution in Dallas. Blair was a major force in local and state politics and was also an advocate for the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. In 2004, he founded the Religious Hall of Fame to honor African American ministers.

Blair lived in Dallas, Texas with Mozelle, his wife of sixty-three years. All of his children were involved in the family business.

Blair passed away on April 20, 2014 at age 92.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with William Blair, Jr. was conducted by Denise Gines on May 2, 2006, in Dallas, Texas, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Baseball player and newspaper publisher William Blair, Jr. (1921 - 2014) pitched for the Indianapolis Clowns and other Negro League baseball teams during the late 1940s. He also founded Elite News, an important Dallas-Fort Worth area black newspaper, and launched in Dallas the first Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Parade.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Blair, William, 1921-2014

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Blair, William, 1921-2014--Interviews

African Americans in the newspaper industry--Texas--Dallas-Interviews

African American baseball players--Interviews

African American civil rights workers--Texas--Dallas-Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Baseball Player

Newspaper Publisher

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers|MediaMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with William Blair, Jr., May 2, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with William Blair, Jr., Section
A2006_085_001_001, TRT: 0:30:12 2006/05/02

William Blair, Jr. was born on October 17, 1921 in Dallas, Texas to Cora Ross Blair and William Blair, Sr. His maternal grandmother was born in North Carolina just after slavery ended, and moved to Wheelock, Texas, where his mother was born. Blair's father, an oil mill laborer, was born in Fort Worth, Texas, and moved with his family to the nearby city of Dallas. There, Blair attended Munger Avenue Baptist Church with his family, and frequented the Moorland Family YMCA, where he played sports and heard Benjamin Mays and Mordecai Johnson speak. Blair remembers his neighborhood; his first day of school; and Juneteenth celebrations. Blair attended Dallas' Benjamin Franklin Darrell Elementary School and Booker T. Washington High School. He excelled academically; joined the football, baseball and track teams; and worked delivering newspapers. After

graduation, Blair attended Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College for one year before enlisting in the U.S. Army against his mother's wishes.

African Americans in the newspaper industry--Texas--Dallas-Interviews.

African American baseball players--Interviews.

African American civil rights workers--Texas--Dallas-Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with William Blair, Jr., Section A2006_085_001_002, TRT: 0:29:09 2006/05/02

William Blair, Jr. grew up in the city of Dallas, Texas, and did not like visiting his grandparents in the rural town of Powell, Texas. Blair also disliked the rural setting of Texas' Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College, and decided to leave the school after one year. He enlisted in the U.S. Army, and was stationed at Camp Livingston in Louisiana. During World War II, Blair served Africa and Italy, and was scouted by Taylor C.D. Hayes to play baseball in the Negro Leagues. Upon being discharged from the Army in 1945, Blair joined the Indianapolis Clowns baseball team as a pitcher, and travelled nationally with players like Charley Pride, Ted "Double Duty" Radcliffe and Ernie Banks. During this time, Blair married his high school sweetheart, Mozelle Jordan Blair, with whom he had seven children. Blair reflects upon the changing role of professional sports teams in the African American community, and the importance of preserving the Negro Leagues' history.

Video Oral History Interview with William Blair, Jr., Section A2006_085_001_003, TRT: 0:25:50 2006/05/02

William Blair, Jr. retired from baseball when the Negro Leagues ended in 1951, and returned to Dallas, Texas to be with his family. He was able to retire on savings from his U.S. military and baseball careers. Blair also assisted his wife, Mozelle Jordan Blair, in her catering business, and wrote for the sports column of the Dallas Express. Realizing that Dallas needed an African American newspaper, Blair created Elite News in 1960. He also established the Elite News Religious Hall of Fame, which honors prominent religious figures in Dallas and

throughout the United States, including Robert L. Parish, Sr., W.A. Shaw and Melvin Wade, Sr. In 1990, Blair published his book, 'The Dallas I know,' a pictorial history of his hometown. Blair describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community; his grandchildren; and how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.