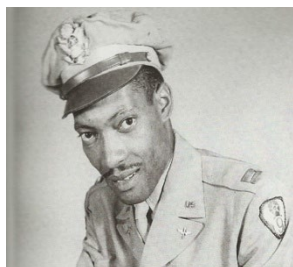


# BIOGRAPHY

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## **OMAR D. BLAIR MAJOR, USAF RETIRED**



Omar D. Blair was born in Houston, Texas, on July 16, 1918, to Omar O. Blair and Lillian Ballard Blair. He attended schools in Denver, Colorado; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Phoenix, Arizona. He returned to Albuquerque for High School, graduating in 1936 with honors despite facing negative racial experiences.

After graduation, he left to attend college at the University of California, Los Angeles, to study Dentistry. After two years, his higher education was interrupted by a desire to enlist in the Army Air Corps in April 1941. He went to Tuskegee,

Alabama, where he joined the group later known as the "Tuskegee Airmen." Capt. Blair had a colorful career and was known to many for his actions in the unauthorized procurement of wing tanks, also known as the "Great Train Robbery." This event in WWII hastened the end of fighting in the European sector. Major Blair retired honorably after serving with the United States Air Force Reserves, with 23 years of service, in 1964.

Omar married Andrea J. Winston from Los Angeles, California, during the war. They later divorced, and Omar married Jeweldine Edwards, whom he affectionately called "Child Bride." To this union of fifty-three years, three children were born: Deborah C "Muffet," Omar D. III "Drew-eee," and Patricia "Tweedie Bird" or "Little Bear." After working with his father in the family business, Blair Cleaners, Omar moved from Albuquerque to Denver in 1951. In the photo on the right, Omar and Jeweldine celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.



Omar worked at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal from 1951 to 1969 before becoming the EEO Officer at the Air Force Finance and Accounting Center at Lowry AFB from 1970 to 1985. He retired in 1985 after forty years of service to the nation and federal government. His years of community service began during his time at Lowry, which included the opportunity to serve on numerous boards in Denver, throughout Colorado, and across the nation. From 1968 to 1978, Omar was appointed Commissioner of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority, responsible for the initial redevelopment of lower downtown Denver and the 16th Street Mall. Creating the 16th Street Mall challenged Omar's "get it done spirit." He helped champion the concept with the City and County of Denver and the business community.

Omar valued education, particularly for the children of the Denver Public Schools. In 1973, he was one of three "wide-eyed liberals" elected to the Denver Board of Education with the campaign slogan, "Throw the Rascals Out!" He was re-elected to the Board in 1979, serving twelve years before retiring in 1985. During his time on the Board, Omar served as Vice President for two years from 1975 to 1977 and became the first black President of the Board, serving from 1977 through 1981. Omar was known for his fairness and determination to get the job done. He often said our work is for the children: "The Kids Are What It's All About!" Omar had a colorful relationship with the media, especially during his time on the Denver Board of Education.

The Denver Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., was established in 1973 and later renamed the Hubert L. Hooks Jones Chapter in 1975. Omar was a Charter Member and secretary and served as President from 1982 to 1984. He was also a National Board of Directors member for Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., in 1982. Additionally, he served on several committees, including scholarship and governance, and was elected Western Region President from 1986 to 1988.

Omar's leadership contributed to the Greater Park Hill Sertoma Club's chartering in December 1985. He served as President from 1992 to 1993 and helped the club achieve Honor Club status. Omar served the Central Colorado District of Sertoma as District Governor and was recognized for his leadership by Sertoma International.



Omar was honored numerous times during his distinguished career. In 1984, Omar received an Honorary Doctorate from Metropolitan State College of Denver, "Doctor of Public Service" for his years of service to education. After retiring in 1985, Omar became deeply involved in constructing a new sanctuary for Shorter AME Community Church. He served as Co-Chairman of the Building Committee during which the new edifice was built and dedicated in June 1990. In recognition of his long-term service to the church (at left), dedicated its fellowship hall in his name. In 1997, it was named: Omar D. Blair Fellowship Hall.

On April 26, 2003, Denver honored his service lifetime by naming the new Denver Public Library (at right) after Omar D. Blair and Elvin Caldwell. The new \$16 million library and museum will be called the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library. Blair-Caldwell is one of only four African American research libraries in the country.



Pictured at left, the final tribute to Dr. Omar D. Blair's life and legacy was the naming of a new K-8 Charter School in his honor after his passing. Omar D. Blair Charter School opened in August 2004 in Denver's Green Valley Ranch subdivision. The school embodies his commitment to academic excellence for all children, especially scholars of color.

Dr. Omar D. Blair joined the Lonely Eagles Chapter on March 25, 2004, due to congestive heart failure. His beloved "Child Bride," Jeweldine, passed away on March 22, 2021. During the years following his death, Jeweldine embraced the organizations he championed, especially the Hubert L. "Hooks" Jones Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Inc.

Omar and Jeweldine are survived by their daughters, Deborah Blair-Minter (Oscar Minter), Patricia (Dale Wetmore), and son Omar D. Blair III. They leave behind grandchildren and great-grandchildren: Dr. Lisa Wynn (Charles Wynn), Addison, and Isla Wynn; Daniel Wetmore (Kaitlynne), Duke, Lucy, Deacon, and Mia Wetmore; Erik Wetmore (Madalyn Tighe) and Valerie Wetmore (Taylor Cullen).

