

About Robert Blair, and Norma

Bob was born on an acreage north of Hoisington, Kansas, the fifth of Frank and Jessie Blair's six offspring. When Bob was four, Frank and Jessie purchased a home on Hoisington's West Third Street across the street from Teddy Roosevelt School. In the photo (right), the family car, a 1932 Essex sits in the driveway. Shown left is Roosevelt School, where the Blair kids attended.



Frank, an electrician for the Missouri Pacific Railroad foresaw that the railroads' rapid conversion from steam to diesel-electric engines would result in the loss of jobs in Hoisington and thousands of small towns across the country. He moved the family to Portland, Oregon, when Bob was in the fifth grade. Bob graduated from Milwaukie, OR Union High School, where he hardly distinguished himself as a student.

Mostly because Bob's friends began college studies at Portland (Oregon) State College, Bob enrolled at PSC intending to major in psychology. During his high school senior year, Bob met Norma at an evening church service in Oregon City, Oregon. Norma's family lived on the west side of the Willamette River barely five miles from where Bob's family lived on the east side. To cross the



river, one had to drive about five miles either north or south. Bob had begun working fulltime at the Bomber service station during his senior HS year. He pumped gasoline and lubricated cars during his six day 2-10 PM shift.

Often, once his shift was over, he hastily drove across the river to visit Norma. The west side of the Willamette south of Portland has steep hills with

tight curves. On his Bomber job, Bob learned how to talk to people, but he didn't always say things that pleased Norma. As a result, their relationship suffered some "speechless" months. Bob's college studies also deteriorated. After about two years of "fits and starts," in his relationship with Norma and his family, Bob began to think seriously about what God wanted him to do with his life.

He also proposed to Norma by buying an engagement ring, placing it in the glove box of his 46 Chevy coupe, and driving to her parents' place on the west side of the river. When Norma came out to the car and got in, Bob told her: "Your ring is in the glove box, put it on and don't ever take it off."

The preacher who performed their wedding ceremony recommended that



The administration building of Central Christian College.

they live at least a thousand miles from their families. He thought Bob had ministry potential, and he recommended a small Christian college in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Thus, Bob spent his second year at Central Christian College (now Oklahoma Christian University in Edmond). Bob and Norma always paid his tuition as he went to school.

Norma worked fulltime at Sears selling large appliances and Bob worked part-time as a stock boy at a large 5&10 cent store in Bartlesville. At CCC, Dr. Hugo McCord introduced Bob to New Testament Greek. Norma helped Bob learn Greek vocabulary and its numerous verb forms using flash cards Bob prepared. He had preached every other Sunday at a small church in Monmouth (Southeast) Kansas. Because Central Christian was a two year school, and also because the Blairs needed to regain their finances, they returned to Oregon. Bob worked at a small Portland manufacturing company operating automatic screw machines for about a year.

They decided to move to Los Angeles so Bob could enroll at Pepperdine College. They attended a Wednesday evening service at the Hollywood Church of Christ the first week they were in town and Bob began working for Tidewater Oil Company in the company's Flying "A" stations. Bob and Norma appreciated the fellowship of the Hollywood church. Wade Ruby, Hollywood minister at the time encouraged Bob to take a double major, (Religion and English). Tidewater Oil Company generously allowed Bob to attend Pepperdine fulltime by adjusting his hours some semesters to fit his class schedule. Norma babysat and took in ironing to help pay expenses.



In addition to his Greek reading classes, Bob chose to take Hebrew, taught by Michio Nagai. When Bob took Greek at Central Christian, about fifteen students signed up for the first semester. Bob was one of only three who signed up for the second semester. He got a lot of personal attention from Dr. Hugo McCord. About the same number signed up for the first semester of Hebrew at Pepperdine.

The second semester found only one other student with Bob. They met in Michio Nagai's office at 7 A.M. weekdays that semester reading their Hebrew Bibles. In a class that size, one has to be prepared or be ready for embarrassment. His classmate and Bob translated the first few chapters of *Genesis*, all of *Ruth*, and several chapters of *1 Samuel*. Bob received a B.A. in English and Religion from Pepperdine College and an M.A. in Religion from Pepperdine.

In the meantime, Bob's job status changed at Tidewater Oil Company. The company discontinued operating company service stations. Bob had advanced or been transferred about every six months. When Bob graduated from Pepperdine, it seemed that no church wanted him. Tidewater offered him a sales rep (wholesale and retail) position in Redding (Northern) California.

After about two years, changes were also taking place at the Hollywood church. Associate Minister Harris Goodwin had long dreamed of evangelizing Mexico and Central America. The Hollywood church sponsored Harris in that effort. The church elders also wanted to more strongly evangelize the Hollywood area by hiring someone to concentrate on that effort, especially among young people. They asked Bob to serve as a fulltime co-minister with Wade Ruby. Wade died suddenly in 1966, and the elders asked Bob to become the Hollywood Church of Christ pulpit minister.

He was invited to serve on the board of managers of the Wilshire YMCA and became a member of the Hollywood High School Advisory Council. Bob led a popular Bible class for business and professional people in the Hollywood area and has conducted hundreds of funerals and weddings throughout the country.



During Bob's ministry, the Hollywood elders approved strong community evangelistic efforts. Members knocked on doors and the church developed an extensive direct mail effort. The church welcomed people of all races and ethnic background, something Wade Ruby had urged in the 1950s and the Hollywood elders reaffirmed in the 1960s. The Hollywood church carries on that loving, godly mission.

Norma, a Texas native, graduated from Tigard, Oregon High School. She began volunteering at Los Angeles public schools. Soon school administrators wanted her to work part time, then full time. She advanced to become the office manager of Laurel Elementary School in Hollywood. Norma retired from that position in 1990.

Baker Book House published Bob's *The Minister's Funeral Handbook* in 1990. Bob "retired" from fulltime ministry in August 1991, after preaching for the Hollywood, Church of Christ 28 years. He hoped to spend more time writing.

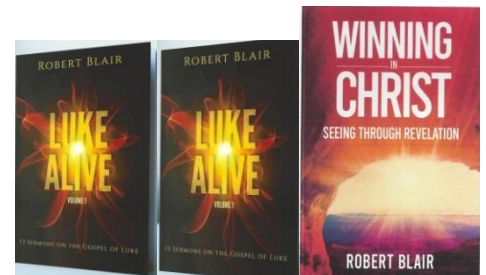
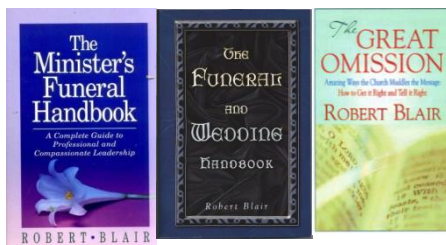
Bob and Norma live on an acreage near the most remote place in Iowa—and also the coldest. They are very thankful for the four children God allowed them to nurture for a while. Bob and Norma both read the Scriptures daily. He continues to write and does fill-in preaching many Sundays. Norma and Bob enjoy gardening and taking walks near their rural home accompanied by their frisky farm Lab, *Josie*. Their wandering cat *Smash* usually tags far behind.



Norma's flowers 2023

Bob's and Norma's greatest interest has been serving the kingdom of God. Both in California and Iowa, the Blairs hosted a weekly Bible study in their home (Norma did/does most of the work). People of many backgrounds gathered in the Blairs' living room to study and discuss God's Word. Bob's articles have appeared in *Leadership*, *Power for Today*, and *21st Century Christian*. His published books are listed below.

The Lord's wisdom, knowledge, and love astound and amaze Bob and Norma. They appreciate, how at crucial moments in their lives, God provided thoughtful, loving people such as you to advise, inspire, and sometimes admonish them. Only the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ deserves honor and praise. Thank Him for the scores of His servants, who remain faithful to Jesus, and are now scattered all over the country and many foreign countries. You may write to Bob at PO Box 176, Cleghorn, IA, 51014. He is sentimentally stuck in the mid-20th century and hates to do Email.



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