

Calvin Coolidge Blair

Calvin Coolidge Blair was born at home in Surry County on June 3, 1920, to William Bunyan Blair and Mervera Roselle Taylor Blair. He had four sisters: Ruby Marie Blair (never married), Vera Susan (Mrs. Earlie Jessup), Annie Belle (Mrs. Daniel Dean), and Martha Alma (Mrs. Charles William Coleman). Calvin also had one brother, John Pershing Blair who died in 1919 at the age of one (1) from the Spanish Flu.

Calvin grew up in a small neighborhood just off Cook School Road in Pilot Mountain, NC. He attended Cook Elementary School as a child and finished high school at Westfield in 1939. He was a good student, liked to read, and took a lot of pride in his writing. Calvin's father was his teacher; his Uncle Edgar Taylor was principal of Cook School. Calvin was the one in charge of keeping the building warm and clean. He would go to the school early and get the fire warm to heat the building. After his graduation, Calvin became a dye man at a local hosiery mill.

Calvin was very musically inclined and spent a great deal of his time writing songs, playing and singing them. Instruments were no problem for him. He could play anything! He played by ear and could tell the key to a tune simply by hearing it. The piano and guitar were perhaps his best instruments. He played lead guitar and sang for a while with a group called "Carolina Pals". The group performed for radio and made music for many socials. It was at one of these socials that Calvin met his future wife, Ruby Ellen Payne (born February 2, 1921).

It was during a time when Calvin and Ruby were building a lasting relationship, that WWII intervened. After December 7, 1941, they made plans for their future together. Calvin asked John Roy and Sallie McCraw Payne if Ruby could become his wife. They consented, and the marriage took place in the Payne home on Spaugh Street in Mount Airy on January 17, 1942. They began their marriage knowing that within the months to come, Calvin would have to serve his country. The inevitable happened and Calvin was sent for training to Fort Bragg in August 1942. The war was well under way by this time.

A few months later on March 5, 1943, their first daughter, Carole Ann was born at Martin's Memorial Hospital in Mount Airy, NC. Carole was about five months old when she made her first train trip with her mother to Brownwood, Texas to meet her daddy for the first time. He was stationed there at that time.

About a year later, Calvin was sent to England as a Pvt. 1st Class with the U. S. Army. He served in the Ordnance Department, as a Military Policeman, and in actual combat. He received an injury that caused disability for most of his life. He returned to the states in the summer of 1945 to a Cleveland, Ohio hospital where he was treated for Shellshock (PTSD) until November 1945 when he returned home.

In June 1946 Ruby was diagnosed with Pleural Tuberculosis and was sent to a Sanatorium in Hoke County near Aberdeen, North Carolina. She was also five months pregnant. On October 17, 1946, the Blair twins were born, Brenda Ellen and Linda Elaine. The twins were taken home one day later but their mother remained at the sanatorium for over two more months. During

Ruby's convalescence, members of her family looked after Carole and the twins with Calvin's guidance.

In 1945 Ruby and Calvin purchased a lot at 503 East Oak Street. This was only two houses from Ruby's mother and daddy's home. Calvin, with the help of family members and a part-time carpenter, built their house which was completed just in time for Ruby to come home on December 26, 1946. This was their home for the remainder of Calvin's life.

Calvin's health was bad periodically after the war. Over a seventeen (17) year period, he was hospitalized on numerous occasions at Roanoke and Salisbury Veterans Hospitals. His lingering illness was service connected and caused a lot of interruptions in his life plans. Ruby worked multiple jobs at one time to help support her family. Her primary job was with Quality Mills where she later became Personnel Manager. Once again, she received help with the children from her parents, Calvin's parents, her brothers and their wives, her aunts and the faithful members of Haymore Memorial Baptist Church.

Beginning in 1955, Ruby battled many serious illnesses and hospitalizations. This included Hodgkin's disease in her thyroid gland, stomach, intestines, spleen, and other areas in her mid-abdomen. She received her last treatments for Hodgkin's disease in November 1962. Her recovery from this disease was remarkable and truly a miracle. During this time, Calvin was intermittently in the Veterans Hospital. He came home in 1962 from the hospital in Salisbury. Through the remainder of his life, he remained home except for short periods of time.

With his illness under control, in the early 1960's Calvin enrolled in Barber School in Winston-Salem. This training was supported by the Veterans Administration. During his barber profession, Calvin worked in Winston-Salem, Toast, Pilot Mountain and Mount Airy. In 1967 Calvin decided to open his own business and so Blair's Barber Shop was established. The shop was built adjacent to their home on East Oak Street. Calvin loved his one-chair barber business and looked forward to serving his community in his little haven he called "home". It was ideal for him as he loved to see his patrons come visit and chat with him throughout the day. Calvin was a skilled barber and made sure his customers looked their best when they left his shop. He was also a great businessman and kept his shop exceptionally clean and appealing. He managed his resources meticulously and always ensured his bills were paid before the due date. Calvin used his time wisely and if there was any downtime he would write music, help with the household chores or start supper for his "Little Darling," as he fondly called Ruby.

In 1965, Calvin's three girls were awarded a full college scholarship by The Department of Veterans Administration. He was so proud that his daughters were given this wonderful opportunity because of his service to his country and the untold trials he and his family had faced due to his service-related illness. Carole earned numerous degrees in Education and was a principal at several schools in Surry County, NC. Brenda earned her BS degree in Business Administration and was a financial manager for a major business firm in Winston-Salem, NC. Linda earned her BS degree in Education and taught at several elementary schools in Elizabeth City, NC.

Calvin was a devout member and deacon of Haymore Memorial Baptist Church in Mount Airy. He was a member of the church choir and always participated in all church events when able, such as the brotherhood and the Royal Ambassadors. His kind service and concern were felt by many. He was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Claude E. Hooker Post in Mt. Airy serving as Chaplain of that organization. He was a member of the Jesse B. Jones American Legion and served as Chaplain both in the local and the district legions. Calvin spent many weekends in the Veterans' hospitals entertaining our sick veterans with his music. Many have said Calvin C. Blair was a gentle, meek, kind individual who was respected and loved by everyone who knew him. He was a loyal, dedicated, and conscientious husband, father, son, brother, and friend.

Carole Ann married Billy Junior Bledsoe and they had two children, Billy Junior Bledsoe II and Julie Ann Bledsoe Saunders. Carole passed in 2016; Junior passed in 2021. Brenda Ellen married John Robert Dalton Jr. and they have two children, Jonathan Blair Dalton (Deceased 2019) and Elizabeth Ellen Dalton Rush. Linda married Harvey Jack Hardy, Jr. They have two children, Brian William Hardy and Benjamin Blair Hardy. Calvin and Ruby now have seven (7) great-grandchildren: Ashley Blair Martin Vogler, Jared Dan Pendleton, EmmaGrey Parker Dorsett, Caroline Victoria Bledsoe, Otis Samuel Bledsoe, Lydia Claire Hardy, and Judson Dalton Rush.

Calvin died suddenly from a massive heart attack on October 12, 1977. He is buried in Skyline Memory Gardens in Mount Airy, NC. Calvin and Ruby had no sons and Calvin had no brothers to reach adulthood. With Calvin's death, this paternal lineage has become extinct. Five years after his death, Ruby married Austin Leftwich Ward. She and Austin were married 23 years until her death July 14, 2005.

Both Calvin and Ruby overcame huge obstacles in their lives. With their faith and determination, they lived the life of God's servant. They served their fellow man with love and humility as commanded by our Lord and Savior, "Love thy neighbor as Thyself."

Submitted from Daughters of Calvin Coolidge Blair
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