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Photo Courtesy of Blair C. Filler, M.D.

HIGH ACHIEVER

Forty-plus years teaching and mentoring young orthopaedic surgeons. Championing increased access to care and medical education. Helping colleagues maintain more viable practices. These are among the achievements that led to **Blair C. Filler, M.D.**

being honored with the fourth annual **William W. Tipton Jr., M.D. Leadership Award**. The award, which includes a \$5,000 honorarium, was presented to Dr. Filler at the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) 2009 Annual Meeting in Las Vegas.

◀ Mrs. Dodie Filler and Dr. Blair Filler at the 2009 OREF Shands Circle Gala in Las Vegas.

RECOGNIZED BY PEERS, APPRECIATED BY STUDENTS AND PATIENTS

Established by friends, colleagues, and organizations through AAOS and OREF, the Tipton Award honors the qualities exemplified by the late Dr. Tipton, including commitment to mentorship, diversity, bridge-building, and collaboration. A similarly named award was simultaneously established by the California Orthopaedic Association (COA) and in its first year, 2006, awarded to Dr. Filler.

Dr. Filler has taught and mentored young orthopaedists while treating patients, mainly in underserved areas in Los Angeles County, at teaching hospitals, and through private practice continuously since 1961. Between 1990 and 2008, he served as director of medical education at Los Angeles Orthopaedic Hospital, and he is currently on the faculty at the University of California, Los Angeles as a clinical professor of orthopaedic surgery, a position he has held for 12 years.

OPENING DOORS, EXPANDING HORIZONS

These and prior postings, including academic appointments at the University of Southern California Medical Center, Centinela Hospital, Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital Medical Center, and the Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical

Blair C. Filler, M.D.
Recognized with
2009 Tipton Award
for Outstanding
Orthopaedic
Leadership

- ▶ Rapelling from helicopters, navigating rocky crevasses, and removing a harpoon from a scuba diver's chest are among the skills Dr. Filler perfected as an on-call medic for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department emergency services team.
- ▶ Central to the 1970s campaign to establish an effective AAOS presence in Washington, D.C., Dr. Filler developed the Board of Councilors resolution that triggered a search for a professional lobbyist, convened the first Capitol Hill meeting with congressional leaders, and has sustained his commitment to advocacy through the years.



Photo Courtesy of Blair C. Filler, M.D.

▲ Dodie and Blair Filler define physical fitness. They scuba dive, run (74 marathons between them to date), climb (including Mt. Kilimanjaro), kayak, and fly — both are licensed pilots.

Center reflect Dr. Filler's career-long commitment to making health care more accessible and orthopaedics more diverse.

Speaking of Dr. Filler's service at the King/Drew Center between 1975 and 1990, the last five years as professor of orthopaedic surgery and director of the orthopaedic residency program, **William C. McMaster, M.D.** of Costa Mesa, Calif. said, "Blair's commitment persisted through political controversy and chronic underfunding. He not only provided service to the underserved minority community of Los Angeles, but encouraged and trained minority physicians in orthopaedics."

Frequently called upon to lecture and consult in upper extremity — particularly hand surgery, for which he trained with **Herbert H. Stark, M.D.** of Los Angeles — Dr. Filler concentrated on muscle transplants that help children

with cerebral palsy to have some use of their hands. An experienced marathoner, he is also a leading authority on conditions common to distance runners.

Former student **M. Mark Hoffer, M.D.**, professor of orthopaedics at the University of Southern California, pointed to Dr. Filler's multidimensional mentoring. "His lectures on bone and joint infections, upper extremity cerebral palsy surgery, and basic ethics of coding and billing remain among the favorite grand rounds sessions for these programs," said Dr. Hoffer. "But most important to me, he is a dear friend whose wise consultation has helped me care for many of my patients."

CONTRIBUTING TO THE WHOLE

Dr. Filler has served numerous community organizations throughout his career, including the Los Angeles County Medical Association Disaster Committee and Los Angeles Olympic Village Health Service. As a member of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department emergency services team for 25 years, Dr. Filler has served as an on-call medic for an impressive number and range of rescues of endangered mountain climbers, skiers, scuba divers, and crash victims.

Summing up his record of service to the orthopaedic community, 1978 AAOS President **Mason Hohl, M.D.** said, "Blair never joined an organization that he didn't improve. I think he's contributed mightily over the many years of his involvement and remains involved to this day."

Numerous subspecialty societies and other orthopaedic organizations have benefited from Dr. Filler's leadership in volunteer and elected positions. They include the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine, American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery, American College of Surgeons, American Orthopaedic Association, American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine, American Society for Surgery of the Hand, OREF, Southern California Hand Society, Twentieth Century Orthopaedic Association, and the Wilson-Bost Interurban Orthopaedic Club.

INSTALLING BEST PRACTICES

The California Orthopaedic Association and the American Medical Association (AMA) honored Dr. Filler for his work to

cultivate fluency in current procedural terminology (CPT) coding among orthopaedists and their staff members.

“Without a doubt, Blair Filler is the doyen of orthopaedic CPT coding,” said **James R. Urbaniak, M.D.**, Virginia Flowers Baker Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, Duke University Medical Center. “Blair’s dedicated and scholarly but modest leadership in the coding arena has had a positive influence on the practice of every orthopaedic surgeon who has followed his principles.”

On related fronts, Dr. Filler served as editor of the *AAOS Complete Global Service Data for Orthopaedic Surgery*, now in its tenth edition, and collaborated with **James V. Luck Jr., M.D.** on the fifth edition of the *AMA Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*.

Dr. Filler’s still-developing legacy as an AAOS Fellow includes playing a central role in the move to professionalize the Academy’s representation among legislative and policy decision makers, and developing a protocol for use by the AAOS Admissions Committee in evaluating applicants for membership to help ensure professional integrity standards.

STRENGTHENING THE WEST

Closer to his home, Dr. Filler is credited with restructuring and revitalizing both his state and regional orthopaedic societies: COA and Western Orthopaedic Association (WOA). “His tireless work in these organizations is appreciated by all who practice in the West,” said **Richard B. Welch, M.D.**, 2001-2002 WOA president. “It’s especially noted that he continues his early mini-marathons while the rest of us wipe the sleep from our eyes, barely making it to the continental breakfast.”

Dr. Filler served in the U.S. Navy from 1945 to 1946. He earned bachelor’s and medical degrees from the University of Michigan in 1950 and 1955, respectively. Dr. Filler interned at Los Angeles County General Hospital (1955-1956) and went on to complete residencies at the Joslin-Lahey Clinic (1956-1957) and at Veterans Administration hospitals in Boston (1957-1961), where he served as chief resident, orthopaedic surgery in his final year. He and his wife, Dodie, have resided in and around Los Angeles since 1961. ■



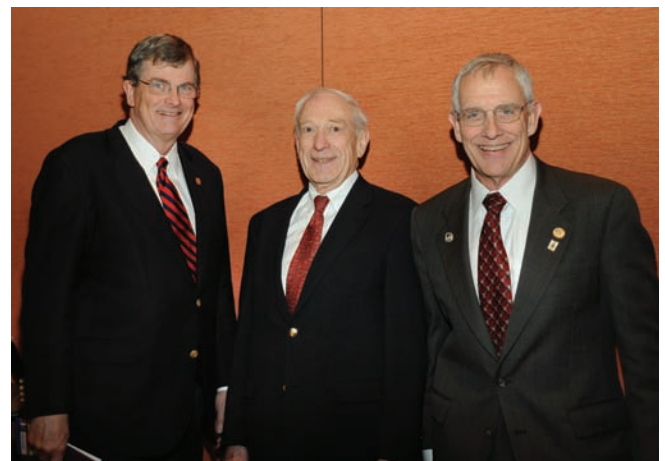
Photo Courtesy of Blair C. Filler, M.D.

▲ Dr. Filler (red jacket), reunited with some of the orthopaedic surgeons he trained from 1975 through 1990 at Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center.



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▲ “Blair and his wonderful wife, Dodie, have been the example of how we all should share our professional careers with a happy stable home,” said Dr. Mark Hoffer.



▲ Dr. Filler is flanked by prior recipients of the Tipton Award (l) 2006 recipient Richard J. Haynes, M.D., and (r) 2008 recipient Michael F. Schafer, M.D. Not pictured: 2007 recipient Stuart A. Hirsch, M.D.