

Medical clinic dedicated to Dr. Blount

Former Guard colonel praised for leadership in medicine, military

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BY CHARLIE BOSS

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Dr. Wilbur C. Blount was a retired colonel in the Ohio Air National Guard and a well-known Columbus ophthalmologist.

But to family, friends and colleagues, he was a generous man who was dedicated to the military, medicine and young people.

Family, friends, military officials and civic leaders gathered yesterday at the Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base to honor his work by dedicating a medical clinic in his name. Blount passed away two years ago at age 77.

"He was a wonderful man, a great inspiration and a great leader," Warren Motts, founder of the Motts Military Museum in Groveport, told nearly 200 people who attended the ceremony. Blount served on the museum's board.

"One of my philosophies in life is that you got to leave the world a better place than you found it ... and Col. Blount did that every day."

Other speakers included Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman; Robert Peeples, president of the Ohio memorial chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen; and former military officers who served alongside Blount.

They spoke of his humanity, his admiration of the World War II pilots known as the Tuskegee Airmen, his commitment to education and his dedication to his job.

Blount was among the first ophthalmologists in the country to use lasers in eye surgery. He was the first black person to serve as the most senior physician with the Ohio Air National Guard. He was a 2004 inductee into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame, and he was a



ERIC ALBRECHT/DISPATCH

A medical clinic at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base has been named in honor of Dr. Wilbur C. Blount. Admiring the plaque yesterday were, from left, former Columbus Councilwoman Les Wright, Blount's widow Elsie, and Robert Peeples, president of the Ohio Memorial chapter of Tuskegee Airmen.

recipient of the Noel Parrish award -- the highest honor from the Tuskegee Airmen.

He also established the Air Force Junior ROTC at his alma mater, East High School, and a Young Astronaut program in Columbus.

Brig. Gen. Tom Botchie, commander of the 121st Air Refueling Wing, said the clinic dedication "will remind many people for years to come what a great man he was."

"It's truly an honor for my husband and for us, but it's an invaluable gift for my children and for his children," said Elsie Blount, the doctor's wife of 30 years. "My husband received many, many awards and he has many accomplishments, but I think his greatest accomplishment is his children."

All five of his children, who attended the ceremony, knew of their father's work but said they didn't realize the scope of his achievements.

"He was very soft-spoken," said stepson Michael Paradis, who lives in New Jersey. "He was so focused on helping other people and doing the right thing."

cboss@dispatch.com

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