

Cyril Marchinton: A Eulogy

Listen you well to the words of a life.
They are few to hear, though a hundred years
and one they span. I speak today
of Cyril Marchinton, a man of honor,
sharp as a tack, whose talents were many.
At his birth in London, a lone airplane graced
the British sky. Cyril Marchinton was
third son of a sea-captain, sails harnessing the gale.
But cold ocean spray cursed Cyril's father
with failing health. His family sailed
for western shores, sharing the hopes
of a new life in Nova Scotia.
For ten northern years, the tyke knew a life
of blizzard snows, and summer sun,
of dairy cattle, and cutting timber
for the coal mines. The memory that stuck
with him longest of all, was his eleventh year,
when wide flew the doors, and windows rattled;
when hell came to Halifax, he heard the death knell.

Cyril's father worked hard, his family to keep,
but cold winter winds weakened the sea farer,
so the family left, fled from the cold,
sought the sunlands, to soothe old ills.
On a farm in the flatwoods, near Florida's coast,
the Marchinton clan coaxed from the land
whatever it would bear. Of all the brothers,
for Cyril alone, the silent song
of the written word, the wonder of knowledge,
called to the boy, beckoned him on
with love of learning, for a life of teaching.
But before he could hearken to his heart's calling,
his father succumbed to the curse from the sea.
Denied the halls of higher learning
by grim mischance, he chose instead
to earn his keep by any trade
that he could find. He found many.
Picking oranges, and packing them up;
laying down bricks, he built schools and
homes aplenty, and a hall for Masons.
He was a vineyard planter, a priest's chauffeur,

poultry-farm foreman, feed store manager,
hunter of gators, hide-harvester,
fine car dealer, crab-plant owner,
and, penny-wise, the popular choice
to join the bank, on the board of directors;
he guided their hands, drew gold from the dross
a full fifty years. And when younger men would
have retired at last, he took up the business
of sharpening axes, and shears, and saws;
if it could hold an edge, he honed it as fine
as edge could bear. Busy as bees, he
made his fortune, in friends as in money.
He took a wife, by trade a teacher;
her name was Rubye. They raised two children,
Larry and Linda, and loved them both.
The family prospered with the passing of years.

But no ever-after is in all ways happy.
Tragedy followed as time wound on.
A car wreck stole his kind-spoken daughter.
His wife passed away from a weakening heart.
The friends of his youth, the years had long-taken.
And cruelest of blows, the keen memory
that held a century, the history of generations,
faltered, and faded, and fled beyond reach.
Wheelchair-bound, bent by the weight
of a hundred summers, his strength failed at last.
But he saw the future of the family line,
held his great-grandson, and gained a measure
of peace from his faith, with his family close.

Though his body rests by Rubye and Linda
where flowers stir in salt-laden breezes,
his spirit is free to follow its path,
and his memory lingers, a light in the hearts
of those who knew him, and those with whom
his tale is shared. As we tell of Cyril,
he lives on in our words.

Cyril, son of Reginald!

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Notes

Anglo-Saxon style poetry is alliterative style rather than a rhyming one; that is, the structure is based on repeating consonant sounds. Lines are divided into two half-lines separated by a slight pause (often shown either as an exaggerated space or two lines).

For more information, download the Anglo Saxon Poetry Guide located here:

<http://www.gemyndeseld.net/stories-by-the-hearth.html>

I chose the Anglo-Saxon poetry style to eulogize my grandfather, given his English heritage and the natural gravitas this style lends.

Although there is a hint of a longer personal tale in almost every line, there are two historical connections that are worth mentioning. As said in Line 6, there was, to my knowledge, only a single airplane being tested in England in 1907. Lines 16-17 refer to the munitions ship explosion in Halifax harbor which leveled most of the city in December 1917; it was the largest man-made explosion prior to 1945.