

HENRY LOWNDES MULDROW

By Charles Evans

It is said that the first impressions are the most lasting. It comes clearly to my memory when I first met Hal Muldrow some forty-five years ago. We were young men entering in upon fields of endeavor which would hold us in close association for almost half a century. As I met him I recognized that as Brutus said of Caesar: "Here was a man with the elements so mixed in him, that Nature could stand up before all the world and say here is a man." He looked the part; some six feet high, broad of shoulders, strong of limb, his sharp blue eyes keen as an eagle's, brow and head moulded for mastery, he stood straight, a handsome figure, courteous, affable, direct, almost to the point of arrogance. One recognized in him that he would make a bold and ardent friend, or a dauntless, unyielding enemy. Through the years I watched his career, I never had reason to change my first impression.

In his last days, when prolonged illness had stripped him of his physical powers, I met him in the Masonic Temple at McAlester. Word had gone around through several hundred Masons that had gathered there that Hal Muldrow was very ill. The leader that through some half a century had shaped the course and developed in the largest measure the plans that had placed the great Masonic Order of Oklahoma in the front ranks among all the states of the Nation, might not be present, but they underestimated his devotion. He entered the corridors of the Temple and I heard him say to some of his friends who had gathered around him: "I would like to lie down; I should not have come, but my love and devotion to Masonry demanded that I make this trip." That night around the banquet table he made his last appeal for and paid his final tribute to the Masonic Order which he held only second to the love and faith of his family. In a few days, he had passed from earth.

Henry Lowndes Muldrow was born in Paducah, Kentucky, October 12th, 1872. His father, Major Robert Muldrow was born in Tibbee, Mississippi, and grew up inheriting all of the blood and traditions of one of the first families of that center of the Deep South. Major Muldrow was honor man of the first class to graduate from Mississippi State University. In a little while, Mississippi called him and he entered the Confederate States Army under General Bedford Forest and served with distinction throughout the entire war. Major Muldrow married Miss Annie Oliver, daughter of Simeon C. Oliver, one of the pre-war governors of the State of Mississippi. With such a lineage and environment it is no wonder that Hal Muldrow always dwelt with passionate love upon his parentage, nourished the traditions of and gave ardent devotion to the South.

Because of deep resentment toward "Carpetbagism" in Mississippi, the Muldrow family moved to Paducah, Kentucky, in 1870. Major Muldrow died there when his son was only one year old and when Henry Lowndes Muldrow was eleven, his mother moved back to her native state of Mississippi.

Hal was educated in the common schools of Oktibbeha county, Mississippi and the Mississippi A. and M. College, now Mississippi State college. Having won recognition as a competent and capable student he was invited to take a place in the Library of Congress which permitted him to enter George Washington University, and he graduated there with the degree of L.L.B. in 1894.

Hearing much of the inviting new West, which had been accented by the "Great Run" on April 22, 1889, and the setting up of the government at Guthrie, of Oklahoma Territory, May 2, 1890, it is no wonder that his adventurous spirit brought him to the active coal and mining center of South McAlester. He had attached himself to the U. S. Geological Survey which had its Indian Territory headquarters at that point.

It was at this time that he made the greatest decision of his life. He met the daughter of the leading pioneer and wealthy merchant, David Osborn Fisher, Miss Mary Daisy Fisher. Member of a prominent Choctaw family, she was highly educated and beautiful, and on April 12th, 1899 in Tishomingo, he made her his wife.

Just before his marriage, in 1899 the adventurous spirit of this young man was revealed when he accompanied a government geological expedition to Alaska and sighted the final angle measuring the height of Mount McKinley, the highest peak of North America. Young Muldrow's reckoning of the height was never changed. His brother, the late Major Robert Muldrow, led the historic expedition and Muldrow glacier was subsequently named for him.

Soon after his marriage, Hal Muldrow began the practice of law in Tishomingo, but his versatile nature demanded that other fields of endeavor should be explored and he gave much of his time to the real estate business. In 1901, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway, built a branch line from Haileyville through Tishomingo to Ardmore, and he was made townsite agent.

Law, real estate and the railway business did not consume his energies so he entered into the buying and selling of cotton and gravel.

The fine quality of his mind and the loftiness of his purposes were revealed when in 1911 the powers of the new State looked out for a man who could lead in the educational world. The A. and M. College at Stillwater, founded in the very first days of Territorial life (1890), had grown to good proportions, but it did not meet the demands of a territory of 69,000 square miles. So Oklahoma set up

three subsidiary state agricultural colleges at Tishomingo, Lawton and Warner. They invited young Muldrow to take the presidency of the one at Tishomingo. He did the job well, but his aspirations led him into the fields of finance in April, 1912, when he associated himself with the Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance Company to which he gave continuous, efficient and record-breaking service for forty years. In 1942, the President of the Minnesota Mutual revealed Mr. Muldrow as one of the really great salesmen of life insurance in America. He said: "While Muldrow has been relatively inactive for a number of years, he is eighth in volume of personally written insurance in force on the Company's books, and has today the largest policyholder with the Minnesota Mutual,—W. E. Grisso of Seminole."

Desiring a larger, broader and a more central field for his insurance and other enterprises, Mr. Muldrow moved to Norman in 1914. Here, in the center of educational life, the seat of the University of Oklahoma, he began a career that led him into a diversified service to Oklahoma and the Nation that has seldom been surpassed.

A zealous Democrat, there was no field too small nor any council too large in state and national politics which he dared not enter. He was called by the Democratic party to manage two gubernatorial campaigns. He served as a member of the State Democratic Committee and Chairman of the Congressional Committee, both with consummate success.

His children growing up, he was interested in all phases of educational development. He served on the school board at Norman for many years and his indomitable courage, his stern convictions and his incisive thinking placed him in a little while upon the Board of Regents of the State University. With all honor to the competent and efficient men that have served the Board of Regents of the University since its founding, it is fair to say, that perhaps, no one has left his impression so thoroughly upon the growth, organization and power of Oklahoma University, the foremost institution of learning of the State, as has Hal Muldrow. He demanded that the Board of Regents keep away from the President's powers and prerogatives; he further demanded that the Board of Regents resist with all power possible any disposition on the part of any and all officials in the State government of Oklahoma to interfere in the business of the University, professional, financial, and the social order centering in and around the pupil activities of that institution. Said he, "Permit the Executive to be the executive." Because of his fearlessness, his unretreating honor, and his willingness to fight when attacked, he brought to this institution a new life of lofty independence which is wholly necessary to any institution of learning.

In 1925, out of his loyalty to his State and to the University that had honored him, he laid out a program whereby the fathers and

mothers who had given their sons and daughters to the University for character building, might be brought around the central altar from whence the highest ideals of the University issue, once each year. So, Hal Muldrow was the founder of Dads' Day. For twenty-five years, it has been the force that has builded the University in the minds of the people of the State as one of the great institutions of America, a thing of lasting pride and power as no other instrument of practical growth for the University. This "Dads' Day", with its gathering of thousands of family members centering around sons and daughters that had graduated, or were attending the University, has penetrated into the Governor's Office, the legislative halls, into financial councils and into every corner of Oklahoma. Twenty years from the time that "Dads' Day" was organized, Muldrow was made president of the group and held the secretaryship of the Association until 1944, when he was again elected President.

The first and most abiding loves of this man were his family and The Ancient and Accepted Rites of Freemasonry. His activities began as a Free Mason in 1899. He entered into all phases and branches of Masonic life, and in 1908 he became Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Indian Territory. After statehood, when the two territorial grand lodges merged, Mr. Muldrow was honored by being made the first grand master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Oklahoma. He is the only man in all of the Oklahoma Masonic world that has ever received such a tribute. It is recorded that when he had reached the 33rd degree in 1909, he was the youngest Mason in the world holding that degree. He was constantly enlarging the channels of Masonry in the State, and was the first to organize the Red Cross of Constantine in Oklahoma. Perhaps his crowning achievement in his long life's work of fifty years in the Masonic world was to organize in 1930 the Masonic Charity Foundation of Oklahoma, which he served as Executive Secretary until the day of his death. Through this, he brought almost half a million dollars into the Oklahoma realm of Masonic charity, building a \$300,000 dormitory on the campus at Norman to assist Masonic orphans. This foundation has increased under his skillful management until finally it embraces a fund of over a million dollars. It was the very substance of his life and he hope to bequeath to his sons, reverence and love for Masonic principles. He has succeeded: two of his sons holding 33rd degree, and the other, 32nd degree. In this connection, Osborn Fisher Muldrow, his oldest son is now one of the foremost in the ranks of the leaders in the Masonic organizations of the State.

John Ruskin said "No man can ride well to any battle without his sword being placed at his side by the hands of some noble woman." This was more than true in the life of this man. Daisy Fisher Muldrow not only blessed Hal Muldrow with children, but gave constantly the faith and love that supported him in every effort

and lifted him to renown. There were five children—four sons and a daughter. His oldest son, Osborn Fisher Muldrow, was born January 12, 1900. He was reared in the atmosphere of the University and of course graduated from that institution. He married Miss Margaret Dannenberg, a daughter of a scion of a remarkable Indian family of the Cherokee Nation. Her great-grandfather, N. D. Dannenberg, occupied high stations in the early pioneer days of the Cherokees. He was the First Worshipful Master of Masonic Lodge 21 of Tahlequah in the year 1850. This Lodge was founded in 1828 in the very beginning days of the entrance of the Cherokee people into the western lands of Arkansas Territory, now a part of Oklahoma, when they were pushed out of Georgia and contiguous states. Osborn Fisher Muldrow entered the business world and has won a leading place in that field. He was President of the Alumni Association of the University of Oklahoma and takes an active interest in all social matters in Seminole, and is a member of the Rotary Club. He has two children—Margaret Ann and Mary.

Mattie Annie Reistle, his only daughter, is the wife of Carl E. Reistle, Vice President and Director of the Humble Oil Company, Houston, Texas, and the mother of four children: Betty Jean, Mattie Ann, Nancy Lee and Carl E. Reistle III.

Henry Lowndes Muldrow, Jr.—“Young Hal” as he is called, also graduated from the University of Oklahoma and followed in his father’s footsteps as a leader in the insurance field. However, insurance became his lesser love because his in-born patriotic zeal led him into the service of the Oklahoma National Guard. His genius for command immediately developed rapid promotion and when the Oklahoma National Guard became the central core of the 45th Division of the United States Army and went overseas in World War II, young “Hal” Muldrow immediately was assigned a pivotal position in that Division. General Ray S. McLain, commanding this Division at the battle of Lazerno Beach when the German forces brought every power to bear in an effort to annihilate the American army as it attempted to establish a beach head that it might move North in the conquest of Italy, and strike at the underbelly of the entire German army on the South, said in the presence of this writer the following: “Here was a crucial hour in history. Here was another Saratoga, a Gettysburg and a Saint Mehiel. If the Germans would drive the Americans back into the sea, they would shake the very foundations of this world-wide effort of democracy in their fight against tyranny. The 45th Division, with Major Hal Muldrow in command of and directing the artillery, was the very center of all the shot and shell by German land forces, the bombs and straffing from above; men were struck down on all sides, and it seemed that the point of disaster had been reached. I saw Major Muldrow standing up and giving orders that brought in the trenchmen, drivers, cooks and every element of the army and unarmed assistants, and he was the instrument whereby the 45th Division held fast until

the American battleships found their sharper, better range, and the day was won." Today, Hal Muldrow, Jr., is Brigadier General of the United States Army in Korea and in charge of artillery of the 45th Division. General Muldrow is married to the former Miss Claramae Bell, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Bell, a prominent Chickasaw family of Purcell, Oklahoma.

In this brief sketch of the life of H. L. Muldrow, there is but one deduction that can be drawn from this story by General McLain: that is, that he was so consumed throughout his life by a noble fighting spirit, born of the blood and bone of the "Old South", dignified and ennobled by the pride and devotion to everything American that out of his family training came two sons, who have won distinction in the service of their country.

Perhaps it may be a statement repellent to critics, but since this sort of historical material must constantly keep in mind any influence of good it may have upon the youth and parenthood that may read it, it clearly reveals that the children are the products of their homes.

Alvin Montgomery Muldrow, the third son, made a distinguished record for courage and leadership on the field of battle in World War II and resigned from the Army as Lieutenant Colonel. He is now a wealthy ranchman and farmer and lives in Brownwood, Texas. He married Miss Vera Kennedy of Pauls Valley. They have two children: Hal Kennedy and Alvin Montgomery Muldrow, Jr.

Another son, Lewis Lowndes Muldrow, was born at Norman and died there in 1918 at the age of seven.

It would be wholly unfair in the record of his life story if it were not stated that among the faithful devotees of the Oklahoma Historical Society, no one surpassed Mr. Muldrow. His deep interest in Oklahoma history, he and his good wife being ancestral American and Indian, a very part of the State, and his ability both as a writer and speaker to present the character and growth of this Commonwealth, it was natural that he should be honored by the directors of the Oklahoma Historical Society with a directorship for a period of ten years. He never missed a Board meeting without cause, and his sage counsel and enthusiastic effort to build the Society has assisted in the largest way toward lifting it to an institution whose influence is felt not only in Oklahoma, but throughout America. He set his heart upon building in the library of this Society a special division devoted to Masonic history. He did his work so well that today if the Masonic Lodges of Oklahoma had most of their records destroyed, they could find all of the real historical values of Masonic history in Oklahoma in the library of this Society.

Solemn services were held for Henry Lowndes Muldrow at 2:00, Friday afternoon, May 18, 1951 in the First Presbyterian Church in Norman, Oklahoma. Dr. E. Kenneth Feavor, Pastor, before a large

group of the leading citizens throughout the State, among whom were the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, representatives from the Supreme Court, heads of the departments of state and dignitaries of every Masonic Order in Oklahoma, paid tribute, as follows: "We are gathered today to pay a last respect to a man who has lived and labored among us and made a mark for himself which shall endure as long as memory fails us not. Henry Lowndes Muldrow was a southern gentleman, strong of will, persistent in conviction, steadfast in his loyalties, aggressive toward the things in which he had interest, positive in his beliefs, always on the spot where he said he was, a man who sensed responsibilities and accepted them as sacred obligations upon him. He drew to himself a wide circle of friends. He left some of his fellowmen standing. I have often wondered what it is that makes a man. I have not yet found the answer, but I think I have some strong clues. One, and I put this at the top of the list, is the courage to be oneself. It was impossible to spend a few minutes with Mr. Muldrow without being impressed with the fact that he was an individual who had confidence in himself. He was aware of his dependence upon his fellowmen and deep down he knew that before God, his Creator, he was always a creature. But, acknowledging this dependence he had that kind of human decency which never forgets that a man must be a man to the best of his ability. This he always tried to be. Some disliked him for it. Those nearest to him, especially his own children, rose up to honor him by reason of it. These latter found in him a reservoir of strength and a constant inspiration."

He rests in a Norman cemetery not far from the home and the University of Oklahoma he loved so well. Sunday, September 23, 1951 The Accepted and Ancient Scottish Rites of Free Masonry in the Temple of their Consistory in the Valley of McAlester, under the direction of the Sovereign Grand Inspector General, General W. S. Key, 33rd degree and officers of the Indian Consistory and co-ordinate bodies, together with a class of some two hundred distinguished citizens of Oklahoma receiving the 32nd degree, held in honor of the truly great Mason, Henry Lowndes Muldrow, a solemn requiem. The ceremony was all the more impressive because the tribute as recorded in the Masonic ritual, was read by his son, Osborn Fisher Muldrow, 33rd degree. The Scottish Rite class receiving the 32nd degree at this times, honored themselves and added one more tribute to this remarkable Mason by naming the class "The Henry Lowndes Muldrow Class of the Scottish Rite of Free Masons."

At last, it must be said there has been no attempt to present a eulogy or necrology. It is simply the tracing, the brief outline of the life of a great friend, a man of errors and full of virtues, a man who loved much and hated much that was wrong. Often as we talked together, we agreed that we enjoyed our hates as much as we did our loves. A good father, a loving husband, a patriotic Oklahoman and a genuine American rests well.