

# A HUNDRED YEARS OF HYLANDERS

A Centennial Sonnet Sequence for Columbia Heights High School

1926-2026

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CHHS Class of 1981

## I. THE FIRST SCHOOL

In nineteen twenty-six, north winds swept down  
Past seven houses buried deep in white.  
Above those roofs, the brickwork crowned the town:  
The city's first high school climbed into sight.

On Forty-first, new doors received the day.  
Boot heels brought silver snow and tracked it in;  
The city reached the threshold through the gray.  
Cold sunlight flashed across each window's skin.

A stone crest kept its watch above the door.  
Fresh ink and chalk gave language to the room.  
Each child brought worlds no ledger yet could score.  
On glass, the frost etched branches into bloom.

From seven homes, eyes lifted to the hill;  
The first bell rang; the town rose higher still.

## II. THROUGH WANT AND WAR

The lean years laid cold fingers on the glass.  
Chalk constellations spread across the slate.  
Small lunch pails lined the wall outside each class;  
The bell drew children onward through the gate.

The mothers pulled book wagons street by street.  
From porches came the volumes, read and worn;  
The Heights Theater gave the books a seat.  
On Central, borrowed stories were reborn.

Through wartime years, the portrait pages gleamed:  
Young faces looking outward, row on row.  
Some sweethearts married, just as they had dreamed;  
Hope outlasted distance, fear, and the snow.

Through want and war, the yearbooks held them fast;  
Their steady eyes still meet us from the past.

### III. ONE SCHOOL IN TWO HOMES

By sixty-one, the classrooms overflowed;  
On Forty-ninth, a new school met the throng.  
The blue and gold moved northward on the road;  
Hylander voices raised one shared school song.

The elder stairways knew the younger tread.  
Memory settled deep in brick and stone;  
One pulse ran on wherever footsteps led.  
Yet neither held the living heart alone.

Crossed keys, a mask, bright rings adorned the shield.  
Two tartan Hylanders stood at each side.  
Then "Roll On" thundered from the court and field.  
The Heights flag flew; the old and new allied.

Now C and H stand joined in one design;  
A hundred years are woven through the sign.

### IV. WHAT TRAVELED FORTH

Bakken gave the heartbeat a second start;  
Young La Belle took the blast and saved two lives.  
Proft made the screen a home for comic art;  
John Alt stood guard through long, punishing drives.

When river girders buckled in the spray,  
Matt Miller answered where the steelwork fell.  
Blue-and-gold banners lined the walls to stay;  
The rafters shook as cheers began to swell.

One writer watched his words emerge in print;  
Through stage and score, far shores came into view.  
Japan's first light revealed the distant hint  
Of worlds a Hylander might yet pursue.

No list can hold the thousands who were taught  
Within these halls, then built the lives they sought.

## **V. THE HEIGHTS AHEAD**

Now many mother tongues find voice and sing.  
From Central Avenue to Silver Lake,  
Stories carried here from homelands take wing.  
A wider Heights is theirs each day to make.

Old type gives way to screens alive with light.  
Book wagons roll into the boundless page.  
Crossed keys unlock the words we read and write;  
Linked rings unite the voices of the age.

Each student threads a story through the plaid.  
The blue and gold go with them when they leave.  
The century is shaped by what they add;  
They cross the stage with much left to achieve.

Lift high the Heights flag where north winds have blown;  
Roll on, Hylanders; make the years your own.