

Long Grove History

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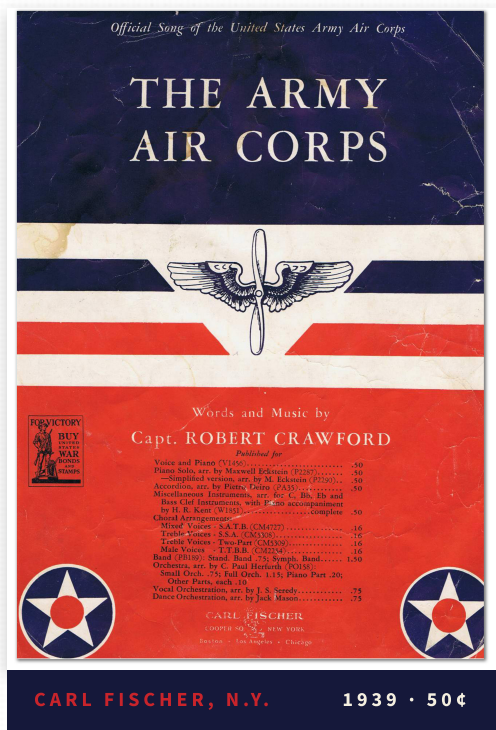
The Flying *Baritone*

Pick a fight with your Kildeer or Hawthorn Woods neighbors next time the "our town is more impressive" debate breaks out. Ask if a song written in their community has ever been carried to the surface of the moon.

By Aaron Underwood · Long Grove Historical Society

Mr. Leslie Schaufler and his wife Kathleen were one of the early modern settlers in Long Grove — moving here from their North Shore home in the 1930's. Their place featured a guest house and a pool, and was a social fixture in the area into the 1960's.

A passion for music ran in both families. Maybe that's why Kathleen's younger sister Hester married a fellow named Robert Crawford — better known as "The Flying Baritone." Born in 1899, Robert grew up in Alaska in a family with a long military history. He tried to enlist in World War One, but was discovered to be underage. So instead he made his way to Princeton, picked up his degree and his pilot's license, and directed the Princeton Glee Club for good measure. Post-college, he combined his two passions into a barnstorming act — flying from town to town giving musical performances and billing himself, naturally, as *The Flying Baritone*.



The Carl Fischer sheet-music cover for Crawford's winning entry. The melody under that propeller was being worked out in a Long Grove guest house six months earlier.



A guest house, a summer, and a melody.

Robert and Hester were married in 1934. In the summer of 1939, they spent some time visiting Hester's sister Kathleen Schaufler, staying in their Long Grove guest house. Robert was working on a melody he thought had promise — and the pastoral environs of Long Grove were well suited for his creative work.

Meanwhile, in the late 1930's, military planners could feel the next war coming and knew morale and recruiting were going to matter. The **Army Air Corps** — now known as the Air Force — launched a contest to create an official song. Over 750 entries came in. As the contest drew to a close, none of them quite fit the bill, and panicked organizers started calling more accomplished musicians to make submissions. Irving Berlin even sent in an effort.

Perhaps through his family military connections, Robert Crawford was urged to try his hand. He put words to the tune he had been working on in Long Grove. The results were so impressive that he was rushed in to give a personal performance for the judges. He was immediately declared the winner.

FIRST LINES — YOU'LL KNOW THEM

Off we go into the *wild blue yonder*,
Climbing high into the sun;
Here they come zooming to meet our thunder,
At 'em boys, give 'er the gun!

Not everyone was a fan.

While the contest judges were ecstatic, not every contemporary listener was impressed. Charles Lindbergh, in his diary that same summer:

CHARLES LINDBERGH · DIARY · SUMMER 1939

I think it is mediocre at best. Neither the music nor the words appealed to me.

History came down on the other side. Crawford's song was credited with recruiting more volunteers than any other poster or campaign of the war.

The tie-breaker for the neighbors.

Just in case there happens to be some other song penned in a neighboring community that I'm unaware of, here's a tie-breaking retort for you: *Oh yeah — has your town's song ever been taken to the moon?*



APOLLO 15 / HADLEY-APENNINE LANDING

Crewed by Air Force veterans Jim Irwin and David Scott. As a tribute to Robert Crawford, the crew carried with them to the surface of the moon the first page of his original 1939 contest entry.

IN MEMORIAM

Robert Crawford passed away in 1961. The song he wrote one Long Grove summer is still sung at every Air Force change-of-command, every base ceremony, every flyover.

ROBERT CRAWFORD · 1899 — 1961

So — should the Kildeer–Hawthorn Woods bragging contest come up again, you know what to do.

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