

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

The US Air Force

ROBERT MACARTHUR CRAWFORD

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This song arose out of a public contest to find an official song for the Army Air Corps. In 1938, Bernarr A. Macfadden, publisher of Liberty magazine, offered a prize of \$1,000 to the winning composer. The song had to be of simple “harmonic structure, within the limits of [an] untrained voice” and its beat in “march tempo of military pattern.” The committee reviewing the songs received 700 entries, none of which were satisfactory. The Chief of the Air Corps solicited inquiries from professional composers like Irving Berlin, but could not find a tune they liked. Just two days before the deadline, Robert MacArthur Crawford (1899–1961), a New York music instructor and aviation enthusiast, hand-delivered a sound recording that was enthusiastically received by the committee.

What story does this song tell about the Air Force? What is its mission? What kind of person joins the Air Force, and why? Why do you think the Air Force chose this song as its anthem? How does it compare to the anthems of the other military branches? How does each of these songs uniquely brand the particular military branch it represents?

Listen to a musical rendition here: www.usafband.af.mil/recordings/.

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! (Give 'er the gun now!)
Down we dive, spouting our flame from under,
Off with one helluva roar!
We live in fame or go down in flame. Hey!
Nothing'll stop the US Air Force!

Minds of men fashioned a crate of thunder,
Sent it high into the blue;
Hands of men blasted the world asunder;
How they lived God only knew!

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Souls of men dreaming of skies to conquer
Gave us wings ever to soar!
With scouts before and bombers galore. Hey!
Nothing'll stop the US Air Force!

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Here's a toast to the host
Of those who love the vastness of the sky,
To a friend we send a message
of his brother men who fly.
We drink to those who gave their all of old,
Then down we roar
to score the rainbow's pot of gold.
A toast to the host of men we boast, the US Air Force!

Zoom!

Off we go into the wild sky yonder,
Keep the wings level and true!
If you'd live to be a grey-haired wonder
Keep the nose out of the blue! (Out of the blue, boy!)
Flying men, guarding the nation's border,
We'll be there, followed by more!
In echelon we carry on. Hey!
Nothing'll stop the US Air Force!