

CALL TO GLORY - How the Convair B-58 Hustler Helped Win the Cold War.

*Thank you very much for the opportunity of sharing this with your wonderful readership!
George Haloulakos*



Doing Research When Writing Non-Fiction / CALL TO GLORY

Our (my wife co-authored) signature book, CALL TO GLORY - How the Convair B-58 Hustler Helped Win the Cold War, has an interesting and instructive backstory. Having followed the military/aerospace industry as a Special Situations Analyst, I later incorporated much of that knowledge into my teaching. Large scale aerospace capital projects provide a unique opportunity to learn the practical applications of Finance, History and Strategy. This led to my publishing a series of research articles and making public presentations on iconic aircraft with my real point of difference being able to provide an easy-to-understand financial profile (while eschewing the technical/engineering minutiae) suitable for a general audience. With well-known aircraft, my "financial" angle was an attention grabber. I then replicated a strategy that served me well as a Special Situations Analyst which was to focus on "under-followed" or "lesser-known" aircraft but were historically important. In doing so, I was able to uncover a treasure trove of information from primary research sources who were eager to share their stories in addition to inside accounts that had not been shared with the general public.

One such aircraft that fit this profile was the Convair B-58 Hustler, a Cold War strategic bomber that because of it being an exclusive nuclear strike aircraft, had rather limited and often conflicting published information. In other words, I uncovered an unserved market niche readership about a classified military platform that was a microcosm of the 1960s. This market niche readership could be well served by providing unique financial and strategic insights that went well beyond the legalistic, boilerplate, public relations literature that was unusually homogeneous, antiseptic and at times, contradictory.

Originally, this was to be a research article based on obtaining oral history accounts from various people connected with the B-58 program. The B-58 was in service for 10 years (1960 - 1970), so there were fewer resources to draw upon for research compared with other Cold War aircraft having significantly longer service lives. Also, since the B-58 was a classified capital asset, this

was an additional barrier to overcome. Since there was a cloud of political controversy associated with the early if not premature retirement of the B-58, there would be a great deal of intrigue to investigate or "unpack" in connection with this iconic aircraft.

After assembling basic information from sources I had used for previous articles as well from the aforementioned boilerplate PR information, I reached out to the president of the B-58 Hustler Association, who in turn, notified his membership about my interest in wanting to publish an economic reappraisal of the Hustler. We were rewarded with a Tsunami of incoming telephone calls and emails from pilots, flight crews, engineering types as well as family members who wanted to share their stories. I was given the privilege of reviewing personal diaries, letters, photographs along with deep personal accounts of numerous events in connection with the B-58 Hustler's development, deployment, active service and controversial retirement. Many of these events and accounts were nowhere to be found in the public record. As we started to construct our narrative based upon the oral histories obtained through transcribing lengthy telephone conversations from people all over the world, it became evident that we no longer could do justice with a research article. My wife surmised we had a "book project" on our hands, and so we began the process of writing CALL TO GLORY, in what ultimately has become our signature work because of its oral history that yielded deeply personal and unique insights that either were lost in a fragmented market or never fully disclosed.

With that backstory as context, I'd like to share with your readership what CALL TO GLORY has meant to me, how it has inspired me and how I planned the research for this book.

I will begin by explaining the purpose and the overarching theme in writing CALL TO GLORY. My purpose was to leverage my finance expertise to conduct an economic reappraisal of the B-58 program and determine what added-value arose from this iconic classified aircraft. The published accounts of the B-58 on record were largely technical in nature (but in some ways, contradictory or conflicting) and followed an eerily homogeneous, legalistic, dismissive narrative that viewed the aircraft as a very high cost, accident prone, low return asset. Since I did not have any connection with either the military, government, aviation or engineering communities, a good number of B-58 Hustler Association members saw this as an opportunity for someone to examine the program with a fresh set of eyes. In other words, a trustworthy "outsider" with an open mind. My Finance specialty and reputation for integrity, objectivity and independence garnered an enormous outpouring of support and cooperation that enabled me to fulfill my goal, thereby leading to the publication of our book. My "fresh set of eyes" approach via the prism of Finance enabled me to provide new insights on the aircraft by incorporating Game Theory, explaining the difference between "price" versus "value" when analyzing capital assets and resolving the contradictory, often fragmented information regarding the operational capabilities of the B-58.

Since CALL TO GLORY was largely an oral history book project, the research phase consisted mainly of lengthy phone interviews in which the participants would share their insights based on a series of topics I had written out on a questionnaire given to the entire B-58 Hustler Association membership. Those who did not do phone interviews wrote out comprehensive answers in reply to the questionnaire and mailed their written contributions directly to me electronically and in hard copy. A number of participants augmented their answers by sharing photographs and personal diaries that helped provide a Cold War time capsule. Since this included

family members whose relatives were directly connected with the B-58, I was privileged to get an "inside" perspective on what it meant to be part of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) with a front-line strike aircraft at the height of the Cold War, including new information about the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the invaluable role of the B-58 Hustler in helping to resolve this standoff.

After compiling, organizing, reviewing and analyzing all of the research information we gathered, I concluded that the Convair B-58 Hustler exemplifies the view that the proper notion of economy and national defense is to create and deploy an asset that is so powerful that it never has to be used in anger because it will deter the adversary. In addition, I concluded that while the B-58 Hustler was a high-priced asset, its **total** economic contribution (as a technology & economic driver that helped create a new echelon of highly trained pilots and highly skilled technical workforce) along with its invaluable role as the "difference maker" in helping resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis made it a transcendent aircraft. These along with other observations (see my attached brochure) created a book with a fresh set of insights on a highly classified defense program shrouded in mystery and controversy.

The outpouring of appreciation from my readership led to my posting this 3-minute video tribute of CALL TO GLORY in memory of all those connected with the Convair B-58 Hustler. To view this via YouTube, please go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhAHtvmWzwo>

The level of interest or demand from those connected with the B-58 Hustler Association plus aviation enthusiasts assured that the research for CALL TO GLORY would result in a profitable publishing venture for everyone involved. It was an honor and privilege getting to know and work with so many amazing people connected with this historic aircraft while acknowledging their service in defense of our great nation. Oral history is a great way to capture special moments in time. Being an "outsider" enabled me to capture the memories of the Cold War generation with a message that honors the past while advancing the future. The generosity of spirit, love of country and service to others from all those who contributed to CALL TO GLORY inspires me to pass along their lessons to those who aspire to follow in their footsteps. I am most grateful.

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