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Honoring the sacrifices of every
Strategic Air Command Family



The B-58 Hustler Exhibit



Some stories are worth remembering



A runway tragedy during an Operational Readiness Inspection resulted in a terrifying “Broken Arrow” nuclear weapons accident when a B-58 exploded.



Miami County's own Lt. Col. Sid Kubesch made aviation history in a Bunker Hill B-58 flying the longest sustained supersonic flight.



Seventeen Bunker Hill-Grissom crewmen were killed in B-58 Hustler accidents



An Extraordinary Warplane

The Cold War engendered a frantic pace in defense technology that was most evident in the evolution of aircraft and missiles. The B-58 Hustler, the world's first bomber capable of supersonic speeds, is the best example of America's technical success in staying ahead of the Soviets. The Hustler flew so fast that no Russian fighter could catch it and so high that no Soviet missile could reach it. Never intended as an offensive weapons system, the Hustler program repeatedly demonstrated that the crews could survive a first strike against the United States and then deliver a devastating counter-punch against an enemy.

The Air Force bought only 116 B-58 Hustlers and split them up between the 43rd Bomb Wing in Texas and the 305th Bomb Wing in Indiana. One third of the Hustler fleet was on constant alert, cocked, loaded and ready to react in the event that the U.S. was attacked. The competency of Bunker Hill airmen combined with the demonstrably destructive power of the Hustler empowered their mission to "stand on the forward wall of world peace."

When the program was cancelled and the last Hustler left Grissom in 1970, only one bomber was left behind. Grissom's sole remaining bomber had been one of the first Hustlers off the assembly line. Built as a combat aircraft the bomber was first assigned to NASA for a series of historic supersonic tests before conversion to a TB-58 (training bomber) and coming to then Bunker Hill AFB.

A cockpit fire during maintenance grounded the bomber and in 1970 she was repaired cosmetically before being placed on static exhibit near the main gate. Our once magnificent and menacing Hustler has sat outside in the harsh Hoosier elements ever since.

The Grissom Hustler is one of only eight left in existence today and attracts visitors from around the world. We proudly preserve and display the aircraft as a tribute to our airmen and their mission of preserving world peace.





“It’s our duty, our honor and our privilege to preserve the legacy”

What became the Grissom Heritage Foundation was formed in 1981 by volunteer airmen seeking to preserve the Grissom story. It wasn't long before local civilians with an interest in aviation got involved. Together the group worked to maintain the collection of historic military aircraft inside the Main Gate.

In 1991 Grissom leadership decided to move the static aircraft exhibits outside the fence where they would become more accessible to the general public. A group of seven local men put their personal finances on the line and signed a promissory note for construction of the Museum's exhibit building. The tri-county community enthusiastically responded by raising the necessary funds.

Three years later Grissom was realigned in a post-Cold War downsizing. Fearing that an independent foundation would lack the resources to care for the historic warplanes, the Air Force threatened to scatter the collection among other museums. Again, the tri-county community responded by contributing thousands of dollars in a demonstration of commitment.

The Grissom Air Museum is a focal attraction in Miami County and was voted second best Indiana museum in a 2018 poll conducted by the Office of Tourism. Last year 45,000 visitors came to the Grissom Air Museum from around the world. The Museum hosted four military reunions of more than 100 guests, an annual car show featuring more than 300 vehicles, an outdoor concert and a number of smaller events.

In a 2019 study conducted with figures released by the Indiana Office of Tourism and through the cooperation of Kokomo Visitors Bureau the Grissom Air Museum contributes more than \$2.25 million to the local community. Our new Hustler exhibit is expected to attract an even larger and more diverse crowd of Air Force veterans, aviation enthusiasts and historians while at the same time preserving a very rare warplane with a rich Hoosier history.

Two Bunker Hill-Grissom Gold Star children attended our reunion last spring of Hustler era airmen. Florida architect Rob Blakeslee's father was killed in 1966 and Shamaine Pleczko of Houston lost her dad in a terrifyingly historic nuclear weapons accident on the Base in 1964. Determined to preserve the legacy of their family's sacrifice, they have joined us in the largest capital improvement to Miami County's most popular attraction in more than twenty years.



Planned to resemble the runway shelters at Grissom during the Hustler era, the steel building will feature glass walls on each end, making the illuminated bomber visible from US 31. The exhibit will include tributes to our heroes, a thermonuclear weapon of the type carried by our Hustlers and a unique ejection capsule specifically designed for our extraordinary warplane.

Design of the Captain Rocky Cervantes Memorial Hustler Hangar is now complete and is being circulated among bidders. Meanwhile, and mostly with the help of Rocky's daughter, we have raised more than \$130,000 toward our goal. An estimated \$400,000 is still needed.

The Grissom Air Museum is a living memorial to the service and sacrifice of the military personnel and their families who served here. The Museum is a reminder of the cultural and economic impact that the Base had on the entire tri-county area for decades and preservation of our Hustler will allow the Museum to tell the Bunker Hill-Grissom Air Force Base story for generations.