

CHP

A Cloak-and-Dagger Debut at CIA

Exhibit on U-2 Pilot Gary Powers Remains Under Wraps for the Time Being

By Peter Finn
Washington Post Staff Writer

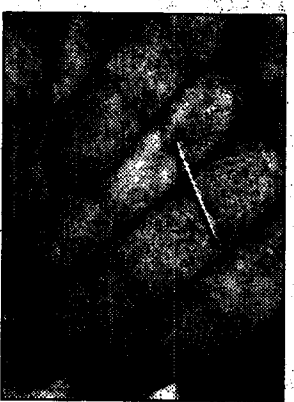
The exhibit is timely, fascinating and, in its way, deeply personal. Problem is, you can't visit it—at least not at its current location.

Heck, even The Washington Post had trouble getting in to the ultra-exclusive little museum at the Central Intelligence Agency. But we have come in from the cold to bring back a sneak preview.

Thirty-five years ago, Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960, was released from Vladimir Prison. Now Powers's son, Gary Powers Jr., has mounted an exhibition on his late father's storied flight, 21-month imprisonment and eventual release in a spy exchange in Cold War Berlin.

The exhibition's centerpieces are two pieces of U-2 wreckage, including one the Russians gave to the U.S. government. The CIA presented it to the Powers family. Also on exhibit are correspondence between Vice President Richard M. Nixon and the Powers family, letters from Powers to his mother, Powers's Distinguished Flying Cross and other memorabilia from the pilot's life.

The other U-2 piece and other items from the Powers flight, including the position pin the pilot carried in case he was tortured, were lent to the temporary exhibition by H. Keith Melton, a military historian who has assembled one of the world's largest collections of CIA materials.



The position pin that Powers carried in case he was tortured had been dipped in curries.

Other items from Powers's life, including his prison journal, are at the National Air and Space Museum.

The exhibit is mounted in the CIA Exhibit Center, a delicious smorgasbord of spookery, including single-shot canes, microdot cameras, silencers, the Enigma encoding machine and all manner of cloak and dagger curios. The exhibit hall even has a flashlight once owned by Latin American guerrilla Che Guevara.

"It's a very appropriate place," said Gary Powers Jr., 31. "It's a chance for a new generation of agency personnel to reflect upon their history."

Powers's father left the Air Force in 1956 to join the CIA and fly U-2s. The pilot, of Wise County, Va., met his wife, Sue, at the agency, where she administered personality tests. On May 1, 1960, Powers was at 70,000

feet over Sverdlovsk, 1,300 miles inside the Soviet Union, when the Soviets fired 14 surface-to-air missiles at him. One exploded near the U-2's tail section, breaking off one of the wings and sending the plane into a tail spin. Powers popped his canopy, loosened his harness and was ejected by the centrifugal force. His parachute opened automatically at 15,000 feet, and he landed, with Soviet forces waiting, in the middle of the USSR.

Three months later, the Soviets convicted him of espionage. He spent 21 months in prison before the prisoner exchange in Berlin, 35 years ago next Monday.

The Powers exhibit opened at the CIA's Langley headquarters in January. "We are having our 50th anniversary, and it's the 35th anniversary of Gary Powers's release, so it was marriage of common interests," said Midge W. Holmes, a CIA spokeswoman. "And some of the staff love meeting Gary and telling him how they worked with his father."

When the exhibition's CIA run ends at the end of March, Powers will take it to the National War College in the District. In late June, it will move to George Mason University. Both of those exhibitions will be open to the public, he said.

Powers began collecting memorabilia five years ago in an effort to learn more about his father, who died in a helicopter crash in Los Angeles in 1977, when his son was 12.

"I had read my father's book and talked to him about what it was like to crash," said

2/8/97

IN FROM THE COLD WAR

Gary Powers Jr. appears with a cut-out image of his father, Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960. Powers Jr. has mounted an exhibit on his father at CIA headquarters, but the public will have to wait for a change of venue to see it. Story on Page C3.

BY ROBERT A. REEDER—THE WASHINGTON POST





PHOTO BY ROBERT A. NEEDER—THE WASHINGTON POST

Gary Powers Jr. says he began collecting memorabilia about his father five years ago as an effort to learn more about him. His father died in a 1977 helicopter crash in Los Angeles.

Powers, who is executive director of the Downtown Fairfax Coalition. "But I was so young when he died. I wanted to know more about him and started to read about him and gather memorabilia."

Powers's interest in his father's exploits has turned into something larger. He wants to erect a Cold War memorial near Arlington National Cemetery and open a Cold War Museum in the Washington area. Among those he has spoken to about join-

ing his board of directors is Sergei Khrushchev, son of Nikita S. Khrushchev, first secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union at the time of the U-2 crash. The young Khrushchev teaches at Brown University.

"We need a museum to record the history of the Cold War from the erection of the Berlin Wall to the fall of Soviet Communism," Powers said. "We should honor all those who did so much good for us in that period."