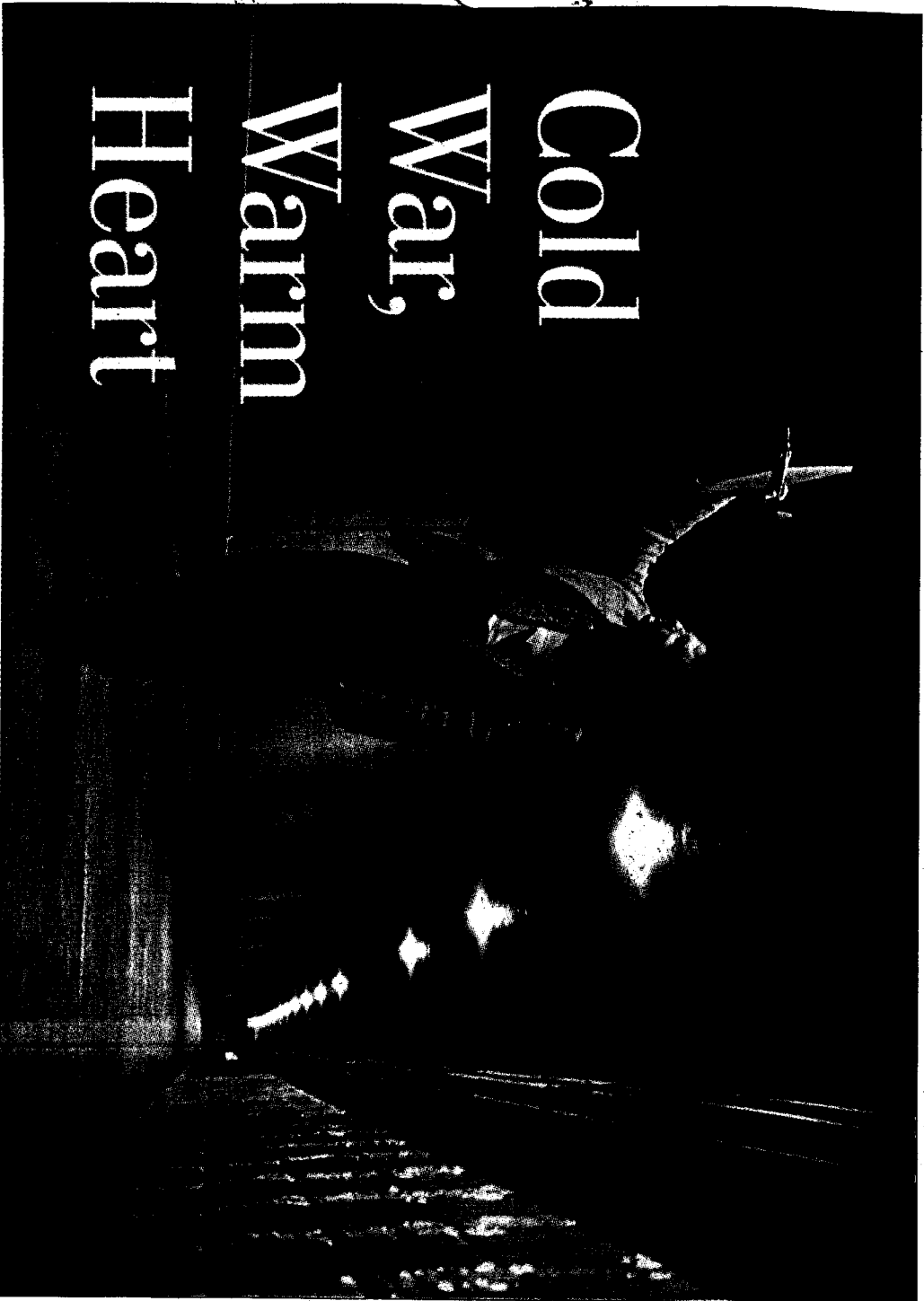


MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2000

# Cold War, Warm Heart



Francis Gary Powers Jr. and a model of the U-2 spy plane his father flew over the Soviet Union nearly 40 years ago navigate the massive underground bunker in West Virginia.

PHOTOS BY GERALD MARTINEAU—THE WASHINGTON POST

# Francis Gary Powers Jr. Looks For a Place to Lay an Era to Rest

By FRANK AHERNS  
Washington Post Staff Writer

**A** WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W.Va., son of the Cold War strides down a concrete tunnel in a bunker designed to preserve the American government after the nuclear apocalypse. The click-clack of his footsteps shoots down the corridor and echoes off a 30-ton iron blast door. If the Soviet ICBMs had

incinerated Washington, this is the place where Congress would have come—a hardened mausoleum hidden beside a luxury hotel in the southern West Virginia hills.

But World War III never happened. Instead, the Cold War did.

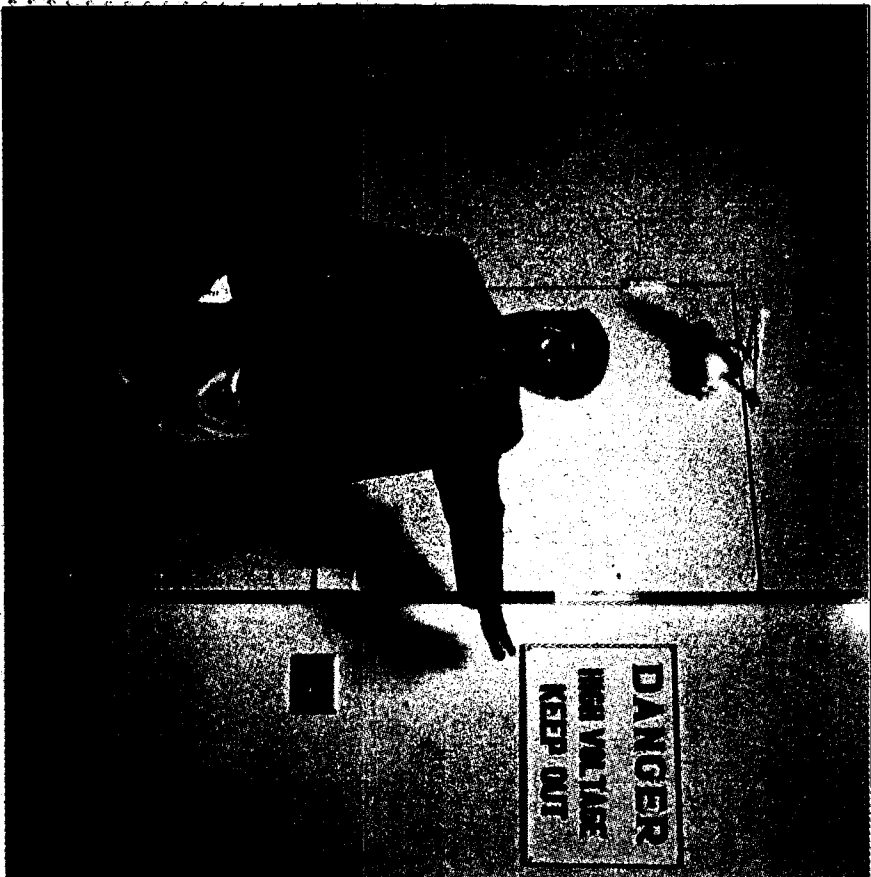
Sprawled across five decades and most of the planet, it claimed thousands of lives and may have cost as much as \$13 trillion. But there are no battlegrounds to tour, no definitive list of wounded or dead. If World War II was a real war, then the Cold War was the outline of war, filled in with shadow. How do you memorialize a phantom?

This man, Francis Gary Powers Jr., is trying. For those who know history, and for those who lived it, the name is familiar. In 1960, in a fulcrum moment of the Cold War, his father was shot down while flying a secret U-2 spy plane over Russia. He was imprisoned for 18 months before being returned to the United States.

It should not come as much of a surprise then, that the younger Powers, at 34, is unlike so many of the rest of us, who have moved far beyond the Cold War. His backsliding, missile crisis and proxy wars are fading fast in the glow of the peace dividend.

Powers, however, has a basement corner full of his dad's belongings, and he's trying to find a temporary place to display them. He is the flesh-and-blood legacy of the Cold War—and perhaps its chief salesman.

Slightly pudgy and quick to laugh, Powers is a Fairfax City PR man who uses his fingers to form "air quotes" around statements. "... get some press and generate some interest," he is saying to



After maintaining it for years, Fritz Bugas now gives tours of the 112,000-square-foot bunker built in secrecy during the Cold War as an emergency home for Congress.

See POWERS, C8, Col. 1

Fritz Bugas, the man who ran this hillside bunker where Powers is now trying to make a deal. In his spare time, Powers hauls around the things from his basement, the remnants of his father's ordeal—his correspondence, a piece of the black plane's wreckage, photographs, other artifacts. He's lugged the stuff to the CIA, to Texas, to Norway. It's going to Germany soon. But he's always looking to add stops on the tour. This bunker might work.

"What do you have now, Gary?" asks Bugas. "Do you have an 18-wheeler, or what?"

"Nope," says Powers. "We got three crates that go with me. If you don't have display space, I'll work with you and the local university or cabinet shops . . ."

His words are swallowed whole by this crypt. The 112,554-square-foot bunker was built with secret urgency in the late '50s, burrowed into a hillside next to the Greenbrier Hotel. Bugas, who spent 25 years running the facility, now gives tours, charging \$25 a head. During the 90-minute walk-through, visitors can gawk at the radiation showers and try to budge the blast door on its massive hinges. This is one of the few places where people can put their hands on the Cold War.

Powers is hoping to add another. He wants to build a permanent Cold War museum in the Washington area—where his father's peripatetic belongings can finally rest—and a memorial in the shape of an Iron Curtain at Arlington National Cemetery. So far he's gotten small elements: a museum logo, a few patches and T-shirts, a modest bank account and a Web page.

But he has big needs: To discover a lost father. To honor him. And to remember his war. Right now, Americans who served in the military or worked for the government between Sept. 2, 1945 and Dec. 26, 1991, can apply for a "Cold War Recognition Certificate" from the Department of Defense.

Powers thinks there should be more. A piece of paper doesn't seem like enough.

### Fate's Flight

What a quick turn history has taken.

John Glenn was a hero of the Cold War. Yet his launch pad at Cape Canaveral was sold for scrap iron years ago. Washington was once ringed with Nike missiles pointed skyward. Now, a Nike site in Great Falls is filled in with concrete. The Berlin Wall was once 66 miles long. Now the biggest chunk of it outside of Germany sits at the Newseum in Rosslyn. It is the unimposing size of three garage doors.

Say "U-2" today and a lot of people will think of an aging Irish rock band. But in 1960, U-2 was part of the lexicon of war, like missile gap, duck and cover, fallout.

On May 1, a farm boy from southwestern Virginia named Francis Gary Powers was strapped inside a U-2 spy plane at Peshawar, Pakistan. He was to fly across the Soviet Union and photograph military targets. Halfway through, he was shot down by Soviet air defenses that had been badly underestimated by U.S. intelligence. President Eisenhower initially said the U-2 was a weather plane gone astray. Then the Soviets produced Powers and the plane's wreckage. Banner headlines screamed across the world.

Powers spent a year and a half in a Moscow prison before being exchanged for a Red spy. Adjusting to home wasn't easy. An already shaky marriage ended in

divorce. He soon married Claudia "Sue" Edwards Downey, a Warrenton, Va., native who had administered his CIA psychological tests. She had a daughter, Dee, from a previous marriage. In 1962, Powers took a job as a test pilot with California-based Lockheed—which built the U-2—and the young family moved to Sherman Oaks, Calif.

In 1965, Francis Gary Powers Jr. was born.

Five years later, his father wrote a book about his ordeal and was summarily fired by Lockheed. Even though the CIA okayed the book, its epilogue was critical of the agency.

What does an ex-spy pilot do for work? Airborne traffic reporter.

The job was merely tolerable for his father, Powers remembers, but "it gave him a chance to fly again."

And the family flourished. The son took the father to school on "show-and-tell" days. There were frequent family picnics and trips to the beach. Hollywood even made a movie of Powers's book; there is a photo of father and son on the film's set. They are smiling.

On Aug. 1, 1977, Powers Jr. was barely 12 years old. His mother, Sue, picked him up after school in the old family Mercedes, the one with the broken radio. When they pulled into the circular driveway in front of their home, they saw a car belonging to a friend of Sue's. As mother and son stepped on the front porch, the door opened and the friend appeared.

"What are you doing here?" Sue asked.

"Haven't you heard the news?" the woman asked.

"No, the car radio's broken. What news?"

"There's been an accident."

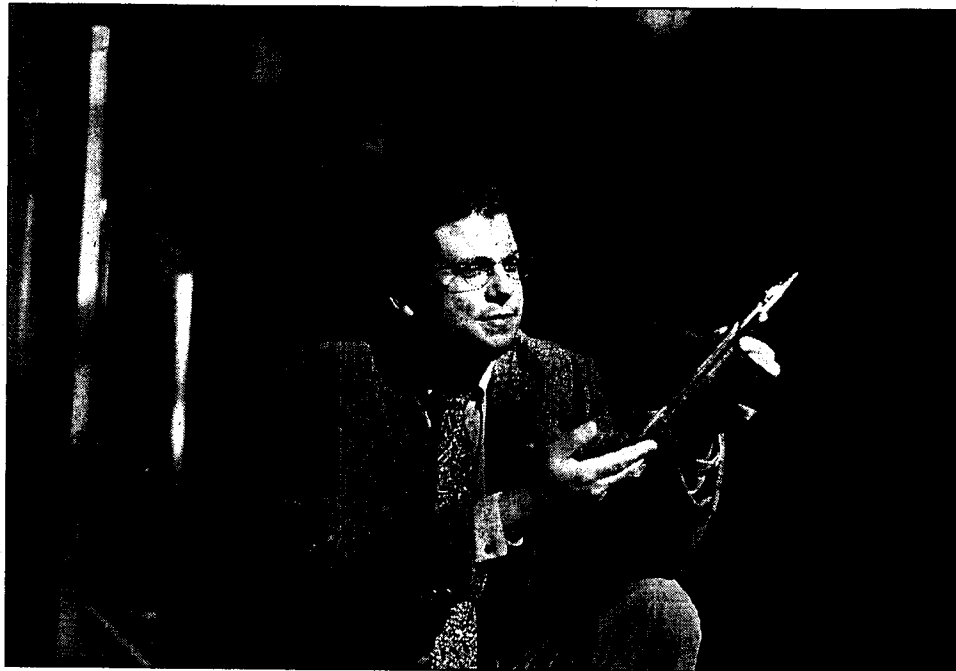
Powers's traffic chopper had run out of fuel and gone down in Tarzana, Calif. He had tried a crash-landing maneuver but failed; the crash killed Powers and a cameraman aboard. The death certificate read "pilot error." Powers, who was 47, was a man who'd fallen 70,000 feet out of the sky into the hands of an enemy and survived.

Now, his life had ended in such an ignominious fashion. Francis Gary Powers Jr. had no idea what to do. So he closed up.

### The Rift . . .

Dee had already left home by the time of her stepfather's death, so the widow and the son spent a lot of time together. Or at least under the same roof. Francis Gary Jr. kept to himself, in his basement bedroom.

"A teacher once told me that, when my father died, the spark went out of my eyes," Powers says. The boy had been outgoing: He was sixth-grade class president. As he entered seventh grade, a month after his father's



BY GERALD MARTINEAU—THE WASHINGTON POST

**Francis Gary Powers Jr. and a model of the spy plane that put his father in the global spotlight nearly 38 years ago.**



1962 FILE PHOTO/UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

**Francis Gary Powers Sr. during an appearance before the House Armed Services Committee after his release from Soviet prison.**



FILE PHOTO/BY ROBERT A. REEDER—THE WASHINGTON POST

**The poison pin that Powers Sr. carried with him when he was shot down by the Soviets in 1960.**

death, he avoided extracurricular activities. If asked his name, he said "Gary," not "Gary Powers."

For years after the father died, the phone and credit card bills still came in his name. It was just one more thing that mother and son fought over. Sometime during his senior year in high school, the boy hugged his mother and told her that he loved her—it was the first time in years. It would be nice to think it was a neat closure, that the boy was on his way. But that would be wrong.

### ... And the Drift

In 1983, while President Reagan was announcing his plans to build the "Star Wars" anti-missile defense system and the Soviet Union was fighting Afghans supported by the CIA, Francis Gary Powers Jr. was hanging out at keggers.

He was just another freshman at California State University—Northridge. He pledged the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and eventually became its president.

As a teen, Powers was ambivalent about following in his father's footsteps—he nearly entered the Air Force Academy, but balked at the last moment. He logged one hour of flight time toward a pilot's license, then quit.

Here at Cal State, he was surrounded by a bunch of other 18-year-olds whose sense of history stretched back to last fall's rush. Here, he could be just "Gary."

And in a strange way it gave him a freedom far beyond that which college normally brings. For the first time, he was able to approach his father's ghost on his own terms.

He started slowly, plumbing the library's collection of old *Time* and *Life* magazines. He scoured microfiche. Read that his father was called unpatriotic for not killing himself while in prison. The son sloughed off such criticism. "They just didn't know dad," he thought.

What the searching son didn't do was study.

As his frat activity increased, his grades plummeted. After four years, short of a degree, he flunked out. He skulked home. He and his mother resumed their fighting. He worked for a real estate developer for two years, then entered Cal State-L.A. and, two years later, graduated with a philosophy degree.

He knocked around. He won a vacation to Costa Rica by appearing on a TV game show called "Relatively Speaking," featuring relatives of famous people.

He went to Mammoth Lake, in northern California. There he helped build a house and worked at a hotel. On his days off, he skied. It was a wastrel's terrific life. He can't remember if he even watched TV the night the Cold War putatively ended—Nov. 9, 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down.

### Crossing the Bridge

And then the Russian TV reporter phoned.

May 1, 1990, was the 30th anniversary of the U-2 shoot-down. The reporter wanted to bring Powers to Moscow. Powers had hoped to see his father's U-2 wreckage, which he believed to be somewhere in Moscow. Instead, as pro-democracy demonstrations flared in Red Square, he was shown scenic dachas in the country.

No matter.

On the way to Moscow, Powers stopped in Berlin. It

was there, in the early morning of Feb. 10, 1962, that his father was exchanged for a Soviet spy and walked from East to West across the Glienicke Bridge.

For years, Powers had avoided his father's footsteps as if they were land mines. Now, at 24, he stood at the west end of the 394-foot bridge and looked east. In his mind, he saw East German guards and the long red-and-white gate arms. He saw his father's footsteps. They were coming toward him.

He walked out to meet them.

It was a warm spring day, but Powers envisioned his father's winter crossing.

"I imagined the cold and the barbed wire and the machine guns and the German shepherds barking at him," he says. In the middle, Powers stopped. Here, his father had passed Soviet agent Rudolf Abel. The young Powers turned, grinned and walked back to the West. Just as his father had.

Two years later, in 1992, he would walk further into his father's past, returning to his home state. He came to Virginia for his grandmother's funeral. For the first time since his father's death, Powers had an urge to engage with his family. His mother suggests: "I think it was about becoming an adult."

Powers entered George Mason University and took a master's degree in public administration. He worked for the city of Fairfax and in various public relations jobs.

But that was only his vocation. Powers was focusing his considerable energy on his father. He visited cousins in his father's home town of Pound, Va. He attended reunions of U-2 pilots. He gave U-2 lectures to history classes at George Mason. He assembled the artifacts of his father's life. He began to pick up history's baggage and tote it with him.

It was 1992, and Francis Gary Powers Jr.'s life was coming together—because of the Cold War.

### Sons of the Cold War

That same year, Fritz Bugas's world was falling apart—because of the Cold War. The bunker he had run for a quarter-century was being forced to close. "I was morose and moping around and wondering if the world was going to fall in," he says.

Don't get him wrong: He didn't regret that the world seemed to pull back from nuclear annihilation. He just didn't know what he was going to . . . do.

"Who knows? Maybe we all *were* a bunch of Strange-loves," says Bugas, who at 70 still emits a fissionable energy.

He has made a bit of peace with it all now. The tours help. "I have found there is a degree of satisfaction in trying to portray this picture of what the Cold War was all about," he says.

On a recent cool and sunny Friday, Bugas stands outside the mammoth blast door, neatly turned out in jacket and tie, white beard trimmed with military precision.

He and Powers have spent the morning together and have hit it off. But Bugas politely declines to display Powers's U-2 memorabilia—they run so many tours through that they have to keep 'em moving, he says; can't have 'em stopping to look at more things.

It's funny. Powers had better luck with another son of the Cold War. Powers's father was shot down by forces under the command of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who also had a son. Sergei grew up watch-

ing the Cold War from Moscow. Today he is a naturalized American and teaches political science at Brown University in Providence, R.I.

In 1995, Sergei Khrushchev went to a U-2 conference in Norway, where he met Powers. The two talked about their fathers. "His father's fate was much more tragic," Khrushchev says.

With Powers's urging, Khrushchev agreed to lend his name to the Cold War museum project. It is one of Powers's successes over the years. There have been a few others.

In 1996, Powers incorporated his museum idea into a nonprofit organization. The next year he persuaded Rep. Tom Davis (R-Va.) to sponsor legislation funding a Cold War memorial. And by 1997, Powers was returning to Moscow, his trip paid for by a Russian businessman.

### Cell 31

This time his Russian tour guides took him to the Central Museum of Armed Forces. Missiles hung from the ceiling. He was tingling.

Was it here?

There! Over in a corner, piled in a heap, behind a rope, was the wreckage of his father's U-2. Finally, Powers could smell the jet fuel, after nearly 40 years. He was frozen by the sight of the wreck. He could read the markings on the fuselage: "NO STEP."

He and two companions were then bundled into a tiny car and driven three hours outside of Moscow to Vladimir prison, where his father was held captive.

On a sunny June day, Powers met prison officials and exchanged gifts—he traded a copy of his father's book for a prison-made soccer ball. Inside, Powers and his companions were led up several flights of stairs and across metal catwalks that groaned and clanked underfoot.

Finally, the prison director stopped before a cell.

In Russian, he said, "This is it." He opened the metal door to Cell 31—it was here that Powers the American spy had sat, here that he had stitched a 2-by-3-foot rug, which is part of his son's traveling exhibit. The son felt a shot of anxiety. He thought: "I don't want to stay."

But he walked inside.

"Can I have a few moments alone?" he asked.

Powers sat on a bunk. He looked up and saw the metal shutters over the cell's one window—angled downward to prevent prisoners from seeing outside, as his father had written. It was quiet.

"I had memories of what my father had told me, sadness for what he had gone through, excitement for the joy of being able to be there as a friend and invited guest," he says. What he didn't feel was enmity toward his hosts for trying to kill his father.

"Hey, dad was spying," he says, matter-of-factly.

### Honor Thy Father

It is night. Powers is heading north through Virginia on Interstate 81, back from his trip to the Greenbrier bunker.

Though Bugas took a pass on the U-2 relics, Powers is undeterred.

"It's all part of the ongoing marketing and public relations," he says. "You have to go through 99 nos to get

one yes."

And even though it sometimes seems this way, the Cold War museum is not the only thing in Powers's life. On Monday morning, he'll be back at his desk at ebstor.com, a Manassas computer company. He has a fiancée, Jennifer Webber, and they will marry in May. Perhaps he'll make a second run at Fairfax City Council (last year he lost—by 200 votes).

Meanwhile, he'll continue to haul around his dad's belongings, like Marley's chains, until they find a permanent resting place.

He'll pull it off, says Webber, 24, who typed the Cold War museum's articles of incorporation. Clearly, he has the will. But what about a clear strategy?

Webber pauses.

"I think he has a lot of ideas," she says. "I don't think he has a clear picture of how he's going to get there at this point."

Powers looks out of the car window into the passing darkness.

"One big sponsor, that's what we need," he muses. Next year, Kevin Costner will star in a movie about the Cuban missile crisis called "Thirteen Days." Powers wants to persuade the movie star to lend his name to the museum project, as Khrushchev has. But he doesn't know how to contact Costner.

It is this energy and naivete that so endear Powers to his sister, Dee Powers Rogers, who is 43, married and lives in Minneapolis.

"My mother instilled in me and my brother that there is one thing we would carry throughout our whole entire life and that is our name," she says. "Especially *his* name—Francis Gary Powers Jr. Gary bears the burden and responsibility as well as the pride and power of that name."

That name. Once, it got a nod of recognition. Now, it may be just one more musty footnote that high school history students are forced to swallow—or are they anymore? Perhaps the phantom war is becoming a genuine ghost.

"These youngsters now in high school or college have no idea what you're talking about when you say something about a U-2," says Sue Powers, on the phone from Las Vegas, where she now lives. She never remarried. When she looks at her son, she sees her late husband's crooked smile. "They certainly don't know who Frank is."

Two years after its introduction, the Cold War memorial legislation languishes in committee. And maybe Costner won't help with the museum. Or anyone else. That's fine, too.

"If I didn't do it, who would?" asks the son of the Cold War. "Who else is there to do it but me?"

Besides, he says: "What else am I going to do with my life?"