

**They were common, everyday items back then.  
Now they bring back memories of an uncommon time.**

# Keepsakes From Korea

Photography by Paul Kennedy

*Pieces of Korean War history run the gamut from entire fighter aircraft to more modest sized memorabilia like this elaborately painted cap. It belonged to 2nd Lt. Clifford Allison Jr., who flew 100 missions in an F-84E with the 154th Fighter-Bomber Squadron (Arkansas Air National Guard), from July 1951 to March 1952.*



*This colorful jacket belonged to SSgt. Norman Fix. He was a radio operator on B-29s with the 345th Bomb Squadron, Yokota AB, Japan, during the Korean War. Even today, such embroidered jackets are de rigueur with troops in the Far East.*



*The name on this flight suit says it all. With a total of 34.5 victories, Col. Francis S. Gabreski heads the list of AAF and USAF aces with victories in both World War II and the Korean War. Gabby posed for this photo with his F-86 in September 1951. He had just shot down his second MiG-15.*

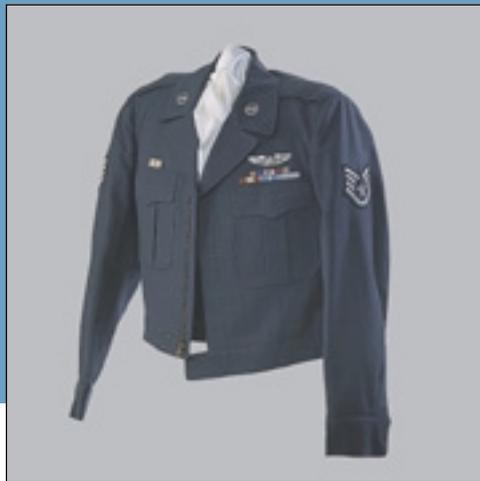




*Painting on leather jackets was an art form that carried over from World War II into the jet age. However, many pilots put away their leathers in favor of newer, warmer garments like the short N-2A flying jacket on the far left.*



*Pride in a new separate service is evident in the artwork on the "spring up" cap above. At left, the "Ike" jacket shows up in its new Air Force blue.*



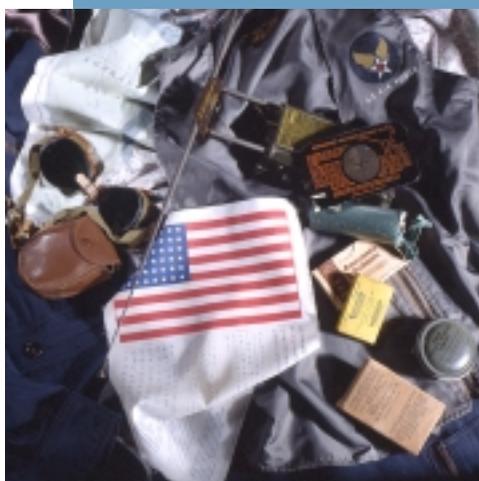
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*Probably the most recognizable aircraft from the Korean War, the North American F-86 Sabre was USAF's first swept-wing jet fighter. Pilots flying the F-86 shot down 792 MiGs during the war, with only 76 losses. This one is on display at the US Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. It bears 4th Fighter Group markings, as flown by Lt. Col. Bruce Hinton on Dec. 17, 1950, the day he became the first F-86 pilot to down a MiG.*

*A new display at the museum depicts a pilot and crew chief walking back from a flight line in Korea. It brings to mind the famous photo (inset) of two 4th Fighter-Interceptor Wing pilots passing beneath a torii-style gateway at Kimpo AB as they head for combat in MiG Alley.*

*The equipment list for flight crews in the Korean War included everything from hard hats, G suits, and side arms to navigation and first-aid kits. In the photo below is a radio carrier vest with a bright yellow life preserver vest in front.*



*An array of survival equipment includes a direction-finding radio, signal mirror, and "blood chit" bearing a US flag. Blood chits promised a reward for assisting a downed American pilot.*



*First appearing during the Korean War in November 1950, MiG-15s were formidable opponents, and US Far East Command offered \$100,000 for the first one delivered intact. No enemy pilot took up the offer until after the war. In September 1953, North Korean Senior Lt. No Kum Sok defected to South Korea, landing a MiG-15 at Kimpo AB. It was disassembled and airlifted to Wright-Patterson AFB in December 1953, then reassembled and flight-tested. It was transferred to the museum in 1957.*



*At left is a flight helmet with a United Nations emblem. Fifteen other nations joined the US and South Korea in providing combat forces for UN Command in Korea. Noncombatant nations provided medical support.*



*The Cold War affected folks on the home front, too, with duck-and-cover drills and buildings marked with bomb shelter signs like the one at the far right. In 1951, the Air Force Association sponsored and Harvey Publications published the comic book shown here. The children who picked it up might well have built the F-86 model pictured, too.*



The museum display of hurry-up-and-wait (at right) signals the end of the Korean War. When it was over, the five POWs shown in the photo inset were among those headed home. Released in August 1955 after 31 months as POWs were (l-r) Capt. John Buck, Maj. William Baumer, A2C Daniel Schmidt, TSgt. Howard Brown, and A1C Steve Kiba.



It is a T-17 carbon granule microphone with push-to-talk switch and five-foot-long rubberized cord. For Korean War veterans, though, it might evoke memories of calling in an airstrike or calling out an alert for MiGs or maybe even calling home via radio.



A pile-lined field cap is a reminder of the bone-chilling winters in Korea—and, in turn, the muddy, unpaved streets in spring. Even humble items like this one have the power to bring back such recollections of the “Forgotten War”—now remembered 50 years later.

We wish to thank private collector Mike Keefe for providing many of the caps and jackets pictured here, as well as the US Air Force Museum for enabling access to its displays and collections. ■