

Travis to unveil restored C-7A Caribou

Airman 1st Class Amber Carter

60TH AIR MOBILITY WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Travis Heritage Center is scheduled to host a bench dedication at 10 a.m. Sept. 25 at Travis Air Force Base, California.

The bench, engraved with names of C-7A Caribou fallen comrades, is being dedicated by the Caribou Association, a war veterans' association for United States Air Force and prior Air Force personnel who were part of the crews for the C-7A.

The Caribou was an aircraft used primarily during the Vietnam War.

"During the war, the Department of Defense took all fixed-wing aircraft and gave them to the Air Force, leaving the Army with helicopters," said retired Col. Robert Whitehouse, former C-7A pilot with the 459th Tactical Airlift Squadron and heritage center volunteer. "The C-7A was one of the planes given to the Air Force. It was primarily a Green Beret support aircraft. It's an S.T.O.L. – short take-off and landing – which allowed us to land in fields as short as 1,000 feet."

Robert Whitehouse and his wife, Ruth Whitehouse, learned about the airplane adoption program during an event held at the heritage center.

"Three years ago, Ruth, my wife and my crew chief, saw an article in the newspaper about the museum searching for volunteers and thought it would be good for us to get involved," Robert Whitehouse said. "They had a barbecue at the heritage center as a way to find people to adopt airplanes. My wife noticed the Caribou and asked if anyone had adopted it yet. They jokingly said to us, 'who would want that airplane?' And we decided to adopt it."

After graduating Air Force pilot school in May 1968, Robert Whitehouse

See **CARIBOU** Page 33



U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Amber Carter



U.S. Air Force file photo

1) A newly restored C-7A Caribou is on display Sept. 22 at the Travis Heritage Museum at Travis Air Force Base, Calif. Volunteers dedicated many hours to paint and restore the aircraft. 2) The C-7A arrived at Travis approximately five years ago. The aircraft was adopted by the Whitehouse family and it has spent the past three years volunteering time to help restore it.



U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Amber Carter

Retired Col. Robert Whitehouse, former C-7A Caribou pilot with the 459th Tactical Airlift Squadron and Travis Heritage Center volunteer, and his wife, Ruth, put some finishing touches on the aircraft Sept. 22 at Travis Air Force Base, Calif. The Caribou will be toured Sept. 25 during the Caribou Association bench dedication.

Caribou

From Page 3

was shipped to Vietnam three months later to fly during the war.

"In support of the Green Beret camps, which were affiliated with the South Vietnamese army, we carried animals to the forward operating bases because they didn't have refrigeration to keep food," Robert Whitehouse said. "We did some air drops during the monsoon season because we couldn't land easily, but that was not the preferred method of transport. Any time you drop something from an aircraft, it has the chance of not landing softly. Most of what we did was supply Green Beret camps with food, water and armament to help them survive in those forward

operating bases."

The C-7A at the heritage center arrived at Travis needing a lot of work.

"This particular plane on display was never in Vietnam because it cost too much to fly them back to the states," Robert Whitehouse said. "It was most likely used for training and was in pretty bad shape when it arrived at Travis. Many volunteers put a lot of time and effort into cleaning, painting and restoring it."

After power washing and getting it ready for paint, Robert Whitehouse was able to add his own touch to restoring the exterior.

"It was painted in Army colors and was in really bad shape," Robert Whitehouse said. "My input on the plane was that I wanted it painted in my squadron colors. The tail has a white cap. Each of the six

C-7A squadrons who flew during the war had their own color. Our call sign was Ellis, so the E on the tail is also for my squadron."

The heritage center is always looking for more volunteers.

"Each unit at Travis has their own airplane to take care of," said Enrique Ugalde, heritage center preservation supervisor and volunteer. "They just sign in and we can help instruct them on what needs to be done to each aircraft."

The newly restored C-7A will be open to tour during the dedication ceremony.

"It's an ugly aircraft to start with, but we are pretty impressed with the turnout," Robert Whitehouse said.

For more information about the heritage center and how to volunteer, call Ugalde at 707-631-3613.