

# Travis Heritage Center Undergoes Changes

By **Ian Thompson**

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The Travis Air Force Base Heritage Center. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE — The Travis Heritage Center is undergoing a transformation that will narrow its scope of exhibits to better show visitors the history of Travis, military airlift and the commands that have called the installation home since it was started during World War II.

That means doing away or cutting back exhibits such as the ones on World War I and space exploration; better displaying exhibits such as the one on Consairways, the contract airline that flew supplies from Travis Air Force Base to the Pacific during World War II; or adding exhibits such as one planned on David Grant Medical Center.

“We will be downsizing some exhibits and expanding other exhibits,” center curator Rick Shea said.

Outside in the center’s air park, that means starting the process to dispose of those vintage military aircraft that do not have any connection to the base’s history.

“We have 39 aircraft now,” Shea said. “We will be getting rid of roughly half of them.”

Shea said the center has eight volunteers versed in aircraft restoration and having that large a number of aircraft “is too much for eight guys.”

The aircraft deemed excess will be offered to other museums and bases that are looking for static displays.

The list of keepers includes all of the airlifters such as the C-124, the C-133 and the C-141; bombers from Travis’ Strategic Air Command days such as the B-29 and the B-52; and fighters such as the F-102 and the F-86, both of which were stationed here to protect the base.

In time, Shea said he would love to get a couple of Travis aircraft that have called the base home for display, such as a KC-135 or a KC-10.

There are also plans in motion to repaint the B-52 Stratofortress, the C-47 Skytrain, C-123 Provider and the F-100 Super Sabre, and to resurface the air park.

The center’s gift shop will also get re-stocked with items that identify with Travis Air Force Base, such as books on Travis and air mobility history; aircraft models on planes that used the base, and T-shirts and coffee cups emblazoned with Travis aircraft silhouettes and logos.

“We get a lot of requests for those items,” Shea said.

He said he is also looking to start a lecture series aimed at both active-duty airman and base visitors to tell them about the base’s heritage along with the men and women who had served there, to educate people about those who came before them and laid the groundwork for what there is now.

It is a lot of work for Shea, who took on the challenge when he arrived here last fall to oversee the Heritage Center.

This is Shea’s second tour of duty at Travis. During the 1970s, he was assigned to Travis doing inventory management in base supply.

Prior to coming to Travis as the Heritage Center curator, Shea worked as a historian at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, and at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico.

While the work changing the exhibits inside the center will take about six months, it may take a few years to move out the aircraft that are not related to Travis Air Force Base’s past, Shea said.

The Heritage Center also seeks volunteers to help out with tasks that range from aircraft washing to administrative work. For more information, call 424-5598 or speak to Shea at the museum between 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

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