

A brief history of the North American Aviation Harvard

The North American T-6 Texan two-place advanced trainer was the classroom for most of the Allied pilots who flew in World War II. Called the SNJ by the Navy and the Harvard by the British Royal Air Force, the AT-6 (advanced trainer) was designed as a transition trainer between basic trainers and first-line tactical aircraft. It was redesignated T-6 in 1948.

In all, the T-6 trained several hundred thousand pilots in 34 different countries over a period of 25 years. A total of 15,495 of the planes were made. Though most famous as a trainer, the T-6 Texan also won honors in World War II and in the early days of the Korean War.

The Texan was an evolution of the company's BC-1 basic combat trainer, which was first produced for the U.S. Army Air Corps with fixed landing gear in 1937 under a contract that called for 174 planes. North American Aviation designed the NA-49 prototype as a low-cost trainer with all the characteristics of a high-speed fighter.

Although not as fast as a fighter, it was easy to maintain and repair, had more maneuverability and was easier to handle. As a pilot's airplane, it could roll, Immelmann, loop, spin, snap and vertical roll. It was designed to give the best possible training in all types of tactics, from ground strafing to bombardment and aerial dogfighting. It contained such versatile equipment as bomb racks, blind flying instrumentation, gun and standard cameras, fixed and flexible guns, and just about every other device that military pilots had to operate.

from www.boeing.com/history/bna/t6.htm

Specifications

First flight (NA-49): Sept. 28, 1938
Span: 42 feet 1/4 inch
Length: 28 feet 11-7/8 inches
Seating: Tandem
Power plant: Pratt & Whitney Wasp R-1340-AN-1 550 horsepower, air-cooled
Speed: 205 mph at 5,000 feet
Crew: Pilot, co-pilot
Landing gear: Retractable
Propeller: Controllable pitch