

Valiant SNV-2

Sunday, 27 January 2008

Last Updated Tuesday, 12 February 2008

Lieutenant (jg) Perry and his instructor were flying Vultee SNV-2 Valiant BuNo 52067 when they ran into trouble over Lake Washington on February 29, 1944. The pilot came in high on an emergency landing due to incipient engine failure and overshot the runway. The engine cut out entirely, forcing the pilot to land the plane on the water. The pilot and his instructor escaped from the plane unharmed. The airplane and engine sank immediately and were not recovered. The Vultee BT-13 Valiant was a basic trainer aircraft produced between Sept 1939 and August 1944 to meet the training needs of the US Army and Navy. The Vultee BT-13 had a continuous canopy with its crew of two sitting in tandem behind dual controls. It was also equipped with blind flying instruments to teach new pilots the basics of flying at night or in foul weather. BT-13 students soon gave the airplane a nickname which described its most memorable characteristic: the Vultee Vibrator.

The only major variant of the BT-13 was the BT-13B, which featured a revised electrical system. Because of the speed with which the BT-13s were built, there was soon a shortage of Pratt & Whitney Wasp Junior engines. To overcome the shortage and maintain production levels, the BT-15, using a Wright Whirlwind engine, was then introduced. Two thousand BT-13s and BT-13Bs were transferred to the US Navy, where they were designated the SNV-1 and SNV-2.

When production ceased in 1944, 11,537 Valiants had been produced. The Valiant was retired at the end of the war, but over 100 of these aircraft are still registered in the United States today, although it is believed that less than half are actively airworthy. Valiant (SNV-2) Specifications

Manufacturer: Vultee Aircraft, Incorporated

Type: Trainer

Accommodation: student pilot and instructor

Power plant: one 450 hp Pratt & Whitney R-985 Junior Wasp radial engine

Dimensions: span, 42 feet, 2 inches; length 28 feet, 9 inches; height 12 feet, 5 inches

Weight: empty, 4,360 pounds

Performance: max. speed, 166 mph; service ceiling, 16,500 ft.; range, 516 miles

Sand Point, a peninsula in north Seattle that juts into Lake Washington, served for almost 50 years as an air base, aviation training center, and aircraft repair depot for the U.S. Navy. Growing eventually to more than 400 acres, the Sand Point Naval Air Station hosted at its peak during World War II more than 5,600 Naval personnel, more than 2,400 civilian workers, and hundreds of aircraft. Units trained at Sand Point participated in some of the critical battles in the Pacific war.

Lieutenant (jg) Carter Perry and his instructor, L. S. Nitka, were flying Vultee SNV-2 Valiant Bureau Number 52067 when they ran into trouble over Lake Washington on February 29, 1944. Reports indicate that the pilot came in high on an emergency landing due to incipient engine failure and overshot the runway. The pilot attempted to go around again and the engine cut out entirely, forcing the pilot to land the plane on the water approximately one mile north of Sand Point. The pilot and his instructor escaped from the plane unharmed. The airplane and engine sank immediately and were not recovered. The State of the Wreck

Today the aircraft lies upside down on the bottom of Lake Washington due north of Sand Point on the eastern side of the lake. The SNV lies on a clay shelf in water 125-130 feet deep. The engine, wings and fixed landing gear are intact. The propeller is intact, but badly bent, indicating that it was probably spinning as the plane hit the water. The section of the fuselage containing the cockpit is badly damaged. The fuselage aft of the cockpit is intact. The tail section is intact, although twisted at an angle. The skin covering the fuselage and wings is generally extremely fragile. Some of the control surfaces appear to have had a fabric covering, which is gone.

The markings on the skin of the aircraft are still visible, including stars on the wings and "US Navy" along the fuselage. There is a small wooden box below what used to be the cockpit of the airplane.

The Valiant in Lake Washington was discovered by Historic Aircraft Preservation, Inc. (Robert Mester) and reported to the Washington Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in 1990 as a submerged cultural resource. This office determined that, because this type of aircraft was well represented in existing collections and not associated with specific historic events, it was not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The aircraft remains the property of the United States Navy. The condition of the Valiant is extremely fragile, especially the outer skin of the fuselage. Even light contact with the skin will puncture a hole in it. SCRET intends to monitor the condition of the Valiant on a regular basis to determine if it is deteriorating over time.