

Designated the BT-13 by the Army Air Corps and the SNV-2 by the Navy, the Vultee Valiant was the next aircraft cadet pilots flew after learning to fly the PT-17 (Stearman), PT-19 or PT-22. Less forgiving than these primary trainers, the SNV/BT-13 required the student pilot to pay more attention to the aircraft in flight. Additionally in the SNV/BT-13, student pilots were introduced to advanced items such as a two-way radio for communication with the ground.



Designed in the late 1930s, the SNV/BT-13 was chosen in 1939 by the U.S.A.A.C. and by the Navy in 1940 for use as a basic trainer. A confidence builder for green pilots, the SNV/BT-13 has been described as a “roomy, noisy, aerobatic and smelly” airplane and received the ignominious nickname “The Vultee Vibrator” from its pilots. The aircraft sharpened the pilot's skills and introduced students to the feel of a more complex and powerful aircraft. Unlike the primary trainers that were fitted with a fixed pitch prop, the SNV/BT-13 was equipped with a two position, variable-pitch propeller requiring greater skill to fly. After mastering the SNV/BT-13, pilots advanced to the AT-6 Texan for fighter pilot training or a twin-engine advance trainer for bomber or transport pilot training.

Once America was fully involved in World War II, Vultee received orders for more than 10,000 SNV/BT-13s, making the plane one of the most important American trainer aircraft of the war. Due to a shortage of the BT-13's Wasp Junior radial engine, Vultee began to fit the Wright R-975-11 radial to BT-13 airframes. A total of 1,693 BT-15s, as these planes were called, were built before the end of the war. Today, the few airworthy SNV/BT-13s or BT 15s left are very popular with warbird collectors and can often be seen at airshows around the country.

