

The Vultee BT-13/BT-15 series is a well known WWII era basic trainer. It was sometimes referred to as the Vultee Vibrator. Following the end of WWII the War Assets Administration began disposing of surplus aircraft including the BT-13. The cost of BT-13 could range from \$600 to \$900.

On March 7, 1947 BT-13 NC-58661 piloted by J. E. Seales of Portland , Oregon was posted missing en route from Sacramento, CA to Reno, NV. Heavy snowfall in the High Sierra hampered initial search efforts until May 15, 1947 when an Army Air Force C-47 crew spotted the wreck of NC-58661 near the head waters of the American River in Placer County, CA.

On May 22, 1947 a ground search team reached the crash site of the BT-13. The impact forces were so great that the pilot's seat belt failed, and his body was thrown clear of the cockpit. In later years a Civil Air Patrol ground team hiked to the crash site and painted yellow X's on the wings. The yellow X's told pilots, hikers, and hunters that this was a known crash site, and need not be reported.

In 2012, pilot Larry Uzelac flew some people over the American River Canyon, and they spotted the wreckage of NC-58661. Mr. Uzelac marked the location on his map, and then contacted www.aircraftwrecks.com, Don Jordan, and Jim Rowan. Don and Jim were able to visit the crash site and photo document it. Thanks to their shared efforts we are able to see the wreckage of NC-58661 as it appears in the 21st Century. Forest fires, and salvagers have degraded the remains of the BT-13, but it's still in remarkable condition, all things considered.

Between 1941 and the 21st Century more than fifteen BT-13's have crashed in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California. Weather was a factor in the majority of these losses.



Long silent Pratt & Whitney R-985 in a recently burned forest.



Extensive salvage was done on NC-58661 over the years, and the wings and engine shown here are the only large parts remaining.



Small parts shown here are proof of salvage work done years ago.



Close-up of the P&W 985, and port wing of the BT-13.



BT-13 left wing with tip assembly intact.



Part of the BT-13's landing gear assembly.



View of the BT-13 crash site showing that the fuselage and tail assembly have been disassembled and removed.