

Roden 1/48th Scale North American T-28B Trojan

by Gerry Nilles

You might say that the introduction of the T-28 is a significant aviation milestone in that it heralded the end of the line for the legendary AT-6/SNJ as the U.S military's number one advanced trainer. The advent of the jet age, at the end of WWII, made clear the need for an updated advanced



training aircraft. As such, in 1946, the Air Force issued a request for a new Advanced Trainer. North American responded with a design that, for all practical purposes, is a second generation T-6. The shape is sleeker for sure; however, the T-6 lineage is subtly there. Powered by an Air Force-supplied 800 hp, seven cylinder, R-1300 Wright Cyclone, using a two-bladed 10-foot prop, the new trainer also reflected the times by having tricycle landing gear with steering capability. In actuality the initial Air Force T-28 prototype is a variation of another prototype already built and under Navy evaluation, the XSN2J-1, which interestingly enough retained the traditional tail-dragger configuration. Flight-testing of the "A" model began in September of 1949 followed by initial production deliveries in April 1950.

As noted above the USAF initiated the T-28 program and was the first to place it into its inventory; however, the U.S. Navy became the service synonymous with the

T-28. The T-28A had a relatively short and less than outstanding career as the main Air Force advanced trainer. By 1956 other trainers, including the Beechcraft T-34 Mentor and the Cessna T-37 replaced the T-28A. Contributing to its abbreviated usage was, in no small part, attributed to its R-1300 engine, whose lack of power resulted in such unflattering names as "Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang", The "Maytag Washer", and a "Maytag Messerschmitt" along with other, more colorful descriptions that have been censored out.

The U.S. Navy's T-28 program came about because of changes to military procurement policies and the requirement to standardize purchases. As a result, in 1952, two T-28As went through the Navy evaluation process, resulting in conditional acceptance pending several major modifications. Not surprisingly

the most significant of these improvements was a more powerful engine, in the form of a 1,425 hp R-1820-9HD Wright Cyclone along with a new three-bladed 10-foot diameter prop. The addition of this larger engine necessitated a redesign of the cowlings, which is the most obvious visual difference between the newly re-designated T-28B and the original "A" model. Other changes of note include a speed brake that is located on the underside of the fuselage between the wings aft of the landing gear bay, and a smaller nose wheel. The first flight for the re-designed T-28B took place in April of 1953 with production deliveries starting the following year.

Being a fan of the T-28, the first thing I did when I received the Roden kit was to pull my ancient copy of the Monogram offerings and make a comparison. Wow, I knew the older kit was underscale a bit, approximately 1/51st scale, but until I put the two side-by-side, I did not realize just how much. Now I know that making a comparison of the two is somewhat of a

stretch considering how rudimentary the older one is, but then again it has the distinction of being the only game in town for over 50 years and is by default, the only benchmark available. In addition, and despite being slightly small and very simple, its shape is correct as demonstrated by some excellent builds. Of course, to accomplish such results took a lot of extra effort and skill.

Now I am not going to bother to count the part trees for you or tell you the color of the plastic because you can do that for yourself by looking at the photos. That said, the overall quality looks good, or if you'd rather on a scale of 1-to-10 I would give it a solid "7". There is a little minor clean up required but nothing like you might find on a re-pop of an older kit. Molding-wise there does not seem to be any sink marks, and although the panel lines are a bit on the heavy side, they are nothing beyond what a coat of primer, such as Mr. Surfacer, would not fix, that is if you even want to bother.

As for accuracy, again it looks good. For what it is worth, I did compare the main airframe parts, fuselage, wings etc. to a couple of T-28 drawings I have, and found that the shapes match up reasonably well and the dimensions scales out accurately. Of course that is assuming the drawings I used are accurate. As for the major sub-assemblies such as the cockpit, engine, landing gear and gear bays, again, they are certainly adequate, and I would say on a par with many of the new kits coming out of China these days. In addition, all the control surfaces are separate and adjustable. As a side note, and like those same Chinese kits, no seat belts or shoulder harnesses are included in the T-28.

However, I do not doubt, that a cockpit enhancement PE set is probably already in the works by Eduard, as are white metal landing gear struts from Scale A/C Conversions. If not they should be (hint, hint).

Speaking of the landing gear the detail is a quantum leap improvement over the old Monogram kit, but the nose wheel strut

does look very fragile, especially considering it has to support 25 grams of weight in order to keep the model on its tricycle landing gear. The assembly instructions look okay, and are nicely illustrated, but should to be studied well prior to starting assembly in order to really understand where all the arrows are actually pointing.

The kit comes with a choice of markings for three aircraft; two from US Navy units and one from a Marine outfit. The first scheme is an all white Navy T-28B, circa 1970, assigned to the Naval Aerospace Recovery Facility based at NAS El Centro California. The second Navy scheme is for a traditional yellow Trojan assigned to the Pacific Fleet All-Weather Training Unit circa 1975. The final scheme is for a white and orange US Marine Corp T-28 based at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii in March of 1977.

To begin, I am going to state the obvious, the Roden T-28B is the first and only 1/48th scale T-28 available. Aside from that, the quality of the kit looks good and includes a respectable selection of markings. Details overall are certainly adequate, and comparable to kits coming out of China, but no seat belts. Finally, and as always, until the kit is built such things as fit, overall look, and problems areas, if any, will not be known.

