

Profile provided by Warbird Alley, with permission of Buck Wyndham

PROFILE: Beechcraft T-34 Mentor

(Variants/Other Names: Turbo-Mentor; T-3 Komadori; Fuji LM-1/LM-2 Nikko; Model 45)

HISTORY:

The **Model 45** primary trainer was based on the successful civilian Beech Model 35 Bonanza. Although first built in 1948 in response to an expected demand by the Air Force, a fly-off competition was required before the decision was made to purchase it. At this time the USAF was trying to figure out the best way to train new pilots; whether to have them start in jets or use piston-powered craft for the transition phase of training. The latter choice was made and in March of 1953 the Model 45 was selected under the designation **T-34 Mentor**. Eventually a total of 450 **T-34As** were built for the Air Force. A year later the first of 423 **T-34B** trainers were delivered to the U.S. Navy, these with increased horsepower.

Consideration was given to arming the craft with machine guns and bomb racks for a potential close support role, but no orders materialized. Eventually, most piston engines were phased out in favor of an all-jet training regimen. However, the Navy decided in 1973 to buy 184 T-34's with upgraded turbine power. This allowed the service to keep the tried and true Mentor airframe, with its excellent and forgiving handling qualities, while providing students with the required experience. The first **T-34C Turbo-Mentor** began student training in January 1978 and production of this model reached 353. A number of countries have purchased a variation of this model to provide forward air control and tactical strike capability. Japan licensed and built the **T-3** version of the aircraft, and also built a four-seat liaison version (**LM-1/LM-2**), often informally referred to as the "Fuji."

After their retirement from active duty with the US Air Force, many Mentors went on to serve with the Civil Air Patrol as spotter and general-purpose utility aircraft. About 100 of the 1,300 T-34s built still remain in military service today.

In the last ten years, the T-34 has developed a loyal following among warbird owners and operators, with well over a hundred now in private hands. Its good looks, maneuverability, and relative economy of operation have captured the interest of the warbird community, and despite recent US regulations limiting its operation, promises to live on for generations to come. [\[History by Jeff VanDerford\]](#)

NICKNAMES:

"The Radial Interceptor"; Komadori ("Robin") (Japanese Air Self-Defense Force nickname for Fuji-built version called the T-3); *Harukaze* ("Spring Breeze") (Japanese Ground SDF nickname for LM-1/LM-2 Nikko four-seat liaison version.)

SPECIFICATIONS (T-34B):

Engine: One 225-hp Continental O-470-4 flat-six piston engine
Weight: Empty 2,055 lbs., Max Takeoff 2,900 lbs.
Wing Span: 32ft. 10in.

Length: 25ft. 10in.
Height: 10ft. 0.25in.
Performance:
 Maximum Speed: 188 mph
 Range: 770 miles
Armament: None

NUMBER BUILT: 1,300+

NUMBER STILL AIRWORTHY: 120+