



1949 Ryan Navion

N4888K Specifications

Year of Manufacture: 1949
Manufacturer: Ryan Aeronautical Company
Powerplant: Continental E-225 (225 hp)
Prop: Variable Pitch
Cruise Speed: 135-140 mph
Fuel Capacity: 100 gallons
Serial Number: NAV-4-1888
Pilot: Chad Hawthorne
Co-Pilot: Jack Hawthorne

About the Navion

The Ryan Navion is a United States single-engine, unpressurized, retractable gear, four-seat aircraft, originally designed and built by North American Aviation (NAA) in the 1940s. It was later built by Ryan Aeronautical Company. The Navion was envisioned as an aircraft that would perfectly match the expected postwar boom in civilian aviation, so it was designed to share many of the characteristics of the North American P-51 Mustang.

While the Navion was designed for the civilian market, it quickly attracted the interest of the United States Army Air Forces. The Army Air Force ordered 83 Navions and designated them the L-17A, to be used as a liaison aircraft, personnel and cargo carrier, and as a trainer for the university-based Reserve Officers Training Corps flight training program.

A Pioneer's Legacy

In 1949, Ruth Hellman purchased N4888K directly from the Ryan Aeronautical Company. Ruth was one of the original 12 Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) during WWII. Known as the "Guinea Pigs", Ruth along with 11 other female aviators were pioneers for women in aviation.

Between 1942 and 1944, at the height of World War II, more than a thousand women left their homes, their jobs, and their families for the opportunity to serve their country and to become the first women in history to fly for the United States military. The women volunteered as civilian pilots in an experimental Army Air Corp program to see if women could serve as pilots and relieve men for overseas duty. These women became the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II, better known as the WASP. Under the determined leadership of Jacqueline Cochran, Nancy Harkness Love, and General Henry "Hap" Arnold, the WASPs exceeded beyond all expectation.

The WASP wouldn't see official military status until the 1970s. Then, 65 years overdue, they received the highest civilian honor by the United States Congress. Further, President Obama granted the WASP the Congressional Gold Medal in a ceremony on Capitol Hill.

