

Something Old, Something New . . .



“Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue and gold.” This traditional verse (well, almost) seems to be a fitting description of Naval Aviation training as it moves into the next century. It brings with it new technology and aircraft, while building on lessons learned over the past eight decades.

The Young and the Relentless. The “old” in the Navy’s air training program is represented by the instructor pilot—the IP: the keeper of the lore, responsible for passing on Naval Aviation’s hard-earned lessons to each new generation of nugget aviators, above. Each IP nurtures that special relationship of love and concern that exists between the eager students and their dedicated mentors. Note the conscientious concern and benevolence of the IP toward the fledgling ward.

Not the Norm for Form. Naval Aviation’s two newest training aircraft are the Boeing (formerly McDonnell Douglas) T-45 Goshawk and the Raytheon-Beech T-6A Texan II (part of the Joint Primary Aircraft Training System), opposite. Both are unique in that they were procured as total training systems, not just aircraft. And both suffer an identity crisis. The T-45, which is intended to replace the venerable T-2C Buckeye and TA-4J Skyhawk, began life as a British land-based attack aircraft. The T-6A, the T-34C Turbo-Mentor replacement for the new millennium, is derived from a Swiss trainer. Adding to the confusion: the T-6A will be flown by both the Navy and the Air Force. To simplify logistics, it will have a common—albeit distinctly un-Navy—paint scheme devoid of red nose, tails and wingtips.

