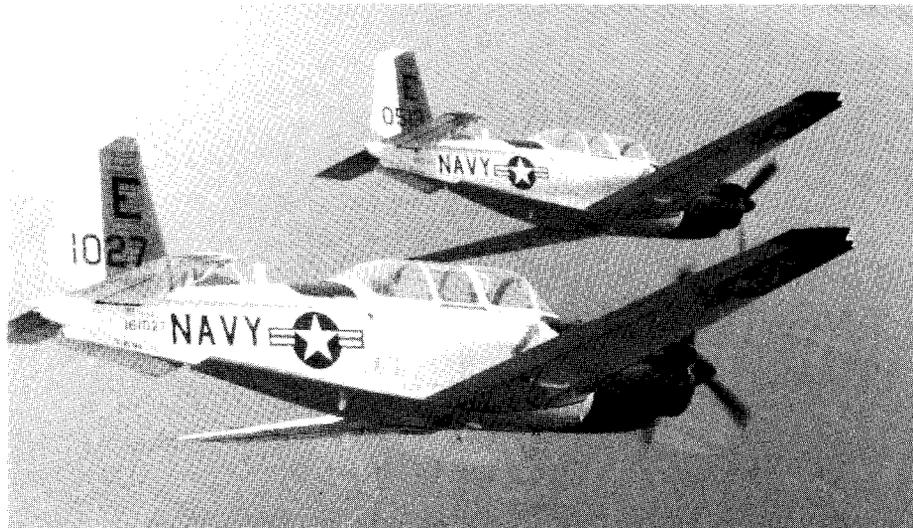


A T-28 making a landing on the carrier USS Lexington.



T-34s assigned to Training Air Wing Five.



A TF-9J Cougar assigned to VT-28 levels off just yards above the flight deck after a wave-off by the LSO.

requirements — it was not equipped with an arresting hook for carrier landings. To correct that problem, the Navy ordered the T-28C. It was essentially the same aircraft except that it had a tail hook and a shorter prop, and was slightly heavier than the T-28B. The T-28C first flew on December 23, 1954, and became operational on November 4, 1955, with the same mission as the T-28B. The T-28s provided over 30 years of service in the training squadrons, a tribute to their hardiness.

Shortly after the introduction of the T-28B, the Navy selected another trainer which was used by the Air Force. The new aircraft, the T-34B *Mentor* not only met the requirements as a Navy trainer but conformed with the policy of standardizing the training aircraft operated by the Navy and Air Force. On June 17, 1954, the Navy submitted its initial order for the T-34B — a two-place, tandem, all-metal, low-wing, single-engine aircraft with fully retractable tricycle landing gear.

The T-34B was selected as a primary and basic trainer to eventually phase out the SNJ *Texan*. It was a lighter aircraft, less costly to produce and operate and, consequently, would provide an overall savings for the Navy in comparison with the SNJ. Ease of maintenance was another advantage. In the area of operational training, students soloed in just half the time it had previously taken in the SNJ and it was anticipated that flying the easier-to-handle T-34B would result in fewer primary training accidents.

The first T-34B was received by the Navy on December 17, 1954, and in the latter half of 1955 the new primary flight training syllabus and the T-34B *Mentor* were officially launched. The T-34B, in combination with the T-28B *Trojan* used in advanced training, replaced the SNJ and became the backbone of the Navy's flight training program. Eventually, the T-28s bowed out of the Training Command to make room for the T-34C in primary flight training. The last T-28 training flight was conducted by VT-28 on February 13, 1984, and the last T-28 left the Training Command on March 14, 1984.

During the *Mentor's* service in the training command, an old tradition came to an end. Since the career of the NY-1 in the late 1920s the Navy had painted its primary trainers a bright yellow for recognition and safety. They were known as the *Yellow Perils* and

when the T-34s entered service, they also received the traditional yellow coat. In 1958, a new color combination of white and day-glo red for better visibility in the air was approved and the *Mentors* began to shed their yellow coats in favor of the new color combination. By August 1982, the last T-34B had taxied to the shop for its new colors, ending the long tradition of the *Yellow Peril* in primary flight training.

After nearly 20 years of *Mentor* service, the Navy began a program in 1973 to update primary training requirements for the *Mentor*. Under a contract with the Navy, Beech Aircraft Corporation modified the T-34B and installed a new turboprop engine and added new landing gear, brakes and wings. The new wings permitted increased fuel capacity. Ease of handling and maintenance, as well as the same low flight costs, were retained in the modifications, and the increased capabilities were attained without sacrificing quality of training.

The first modified T-34B, designated YT-34C, flew on September 21, 1973, and the first T-34C *Turbo-Mentors* were delivered in 1976, featuring air-conditioned cockpits, instrumentation, communication and navigation equipment, and a quieter, more powerful turboprop engine. Service use began in November 1977 when Training Air Wing 5 received its first T-34Cs at Pensacola. This began the gradual phaseout of the T-28s.

Advances in jet aircraft continued during the fifties. With delivery of the Navy's first swept-wing aircraft, the F9F-6 *Cougar*, to VF-32 in November 1952, the need for new training requirements became apparent. A two-seat fighter trainer was developed by Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation and on February 29, 1956, an F9F-8T *Cougar* configured for training made its maiden flight. The production model F9F-8T followed with its first flight on July 5, 1956. It had an additional cockpit installed forward of the original one and each cockpit was fully equipped with all the instruments and controls standard in the F9F-8 fighter. The controls were interchangeable between the instructor and student pilot positions, with solo control operated from the forward cockpit. The primary mission of the F9F-8T was training for swept-wing, all-weather operations, as well as carrier landing, gunnery, instrument and navigational training and in-flight

refueling techniques of other operational jet aircraft.

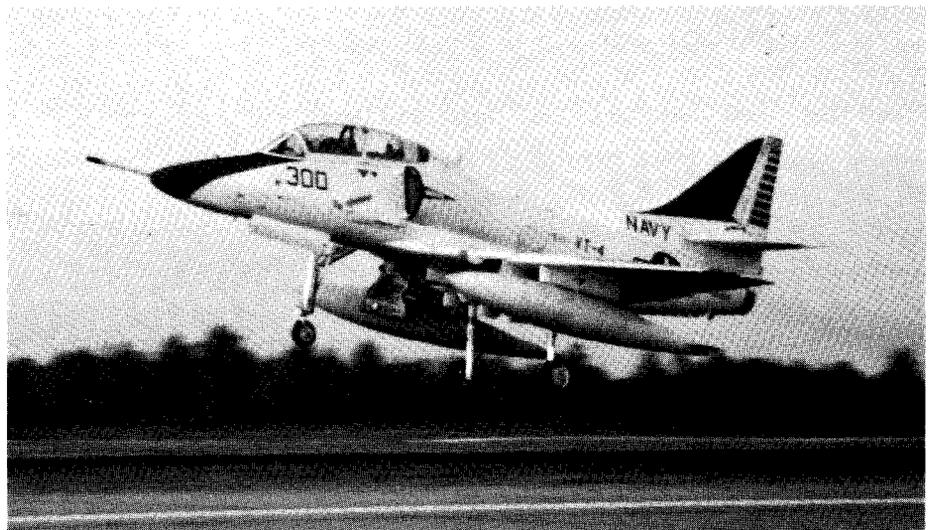
During the Vietnam conflict, F9F-8T *Cougars* flew air-ground support for Marine Air Group 11's Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron, and were also used for armed reconnaissance missions. The straight-wing F9F *Panther*, forerunner of the F9F-6 *Cougar*, had served as a ground support aircraft in the Korean War.

By September 1957, the swept-wing F9F-8T was being used for the first time in the Navy's training command, replacing the straight-wing F9F-2 *Panthers* which had been part of advanced flight training. The F9F-8Ts were also in the fleet replacement squadrons responsible for refresher training and checkout of pilots for operational squadrons. On February 2, 1960, the last F9F-8T, also the last of the F9F-8 *Cougar* series, was delivered to the Navy. This was the beginning of the end for the F9F-8T *Cougars* (redesignated TF-9J in 1962) in the training command. The last TF-9J operational training flight occurred in February 1974, when a class of VT-4 flight students completed carrier qualifications aboard *John F. Kennedy*. The TF-9J was replaced by the TA-4J *Skyhawk* already in the training command. The last F9F-8T *Cougars* in the training command departed on March 1, 1974, for retirement at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

Looking toward a replacement for its aging TF-9Js, the Navy had, in 1964, revised its production contract for the A-4E *Skyhawk* to have the last two

production models configured as trainers. The TA-4E was a two-seater version of the A-4E and was derived from the long-lived A-4 *Skyhawk* which was designed in the 1950-52 period. The first A-4 flew in February 1954 and was assigned to the fleet in October 1956. Two TA-4E prototypes were built, followed by the first production aircraft, TA-4Fs, which were delivered to fleet replacement squadron VA-125 on May 19, 1968. The TA-4F had its fuselage extended 28 inches to make it a tandem-seat aircraft with dual controls and instruments. It incorporated nose wheel steering for ease in taxiing, spoilers for improved crosswind landings, an automatic pilot and a new ejection system capable of safely ejecting the pilot at zero altitude and speed. All aspects of advanced jet training, including weapons delivery, carrier landings, and operational and instrument flying could be performed by the TA-4F.

The TA-4J training version followed, basically the same as the TA-4F but without the tactical air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons systems. It was also fitted with a less powerful engine. The changes made it easier to maintain and less costly to operate. The first TA-4Js in the advanced training command, faster and more maneuverable than the TF-9Js, were received by VT-21 on June 6, 1969, and were immediately incorporated in the training program. A number of other units also flew TA-4F and TA-4J *Skyhawks*: VA-45, VA-127, VF-126, RVAH-3, VF-43, VF-101 Det Key West, VAQ-33 and several fleet



A TA-4J assigned to VT-21 practices touch and goes.

T-2Bs assigned to VT-10 making an approach at Pensacola.

