

Leroy Randle Grumman

Leroy Randle Grumman, (born Jan. 4, 1895, Huntington, New York, USA.—died Oct. 4, 1982, Manhasset, New York), American aeronautical engineer and founder of the Grumman Aerospace Corporation. He designed some of the most effective naval aircraft used in World War II.

After graduating from Cornell University, Grumman joined the US Navy and served as a flight instructor and later as a test pilot. Following World War I he worked for the Loening Aeronautical Engineering Corp., but in 1929 he founded the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation on Long Island, N.Y. His FF-1, which entered service with the U.S. Navy in 1933, was a two-seat biplane with retractable landing gear. With the F4F Wildcat, introduced in 1940, Grumman switched to monoplane construction. The F4F featured a folding wing for compact stowage and was the United States' principal carrier-based fighter plane until Grumman's F6F Hellcat entered service in 1943. The F6F showed the bulky, ungainly, teardrop-shaped lines for which Grumman became famous, but it became the most successful fighter in the Pacific theatre, outflying and outgunning the Japanese Zero. The Hellcat was the first plane built to pilot specifications, the first produced in mass before a test flight had been conducted, and an aircraft that set production records because it was built so quickly. Another Grumman aircraft, the TBF Avenger, was the navy's premier torpedo bomber. With the F9F Panther, designed at war's end, Grumman fighters entered the jet age.

In 1946 Grumman stepped down as president of his company, but he remained chairman of the board until 1966. The Grumman Corporation continued its association with the U.S. Navy, producing the A-6 Intruder attack aircraft in the 1960s and the iconic F-14 Tomcat fighter in the '70s.

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