

## Daniel Guggenheim Medal

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### MEDALIST FOR 1948

*For outstanding achievement in successfully advancing aircraft design, both for Naval and peacetime use.*



### LEROY RANDLE GRUMMAN

Vice-Admiral John McCain, one of the Navy's great fighting admirals, once remarked: "The name Grumman on a plane is like sterling on silver."

The name is that of Leroy Randle Grumman, who was born in Huntington, New York, on January 4, 1895, worked his way through Cornell University, and for the three subsequent years served in the Navy as a pilot in World War I. Returning to civilian life he became General Manager of the Loening Aeronautical Corporation. In 1929 he formed the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation at Bethpage, Long Island, with a total capital of \$67,000. Grumman served as President of the company until 1946, when he became Chairman of the Board.

The company obtained its first Navy contract—for two amphibian floats—at \$33,700. A contract for an experimental fighting plane followed. This was the first Navy fighter with retractable landing wheels, and its speed of 206 miles per hour caused a sensation. Grumman also began building amphibians for sportsmen and corporation executives. By 1939, Grumman had 700 employees. When war came, expansion was rapid.

The Grumman folding wing fighters of the "cat" family served a vital purpose in saving space, thus multiplying the carrier's striking force. To solve the problem of a folding wing which would be practical and also rugged when unfolded, Grumman is said to have made no theoretical drawings, but instead took drawing paper, a gum eraser, a pencil, and some paper clips and worked with these until he had arrived at the solution.

The first Hellcat was built in August 1942. The hierarchy of the "cats": the Wildcat, the Hellcat, the Bearcat and the twin-engine Tiger Cat, wrote a continuing story of triumph in the Pacific. In the first five months of 1944, Navy pilots destroyed 444 enemy planes in the air and another 323 on the ground. In the great air battle of the Marianas, Hellcat pilots brought down 365 Japanese planes in one day. Hellcats, Wildcats, and Avengers proved potent weapons against U-boats in the Atlantic. The Wildcats flew from baby flattops and, together with the rocket-firing Avengers, destroyed 31 German submarines in one six-month period.

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Following World War II's propeller-driven aircraft, Grumman's first jet fighter was the F9F-5 Panther which, in encounters with the Russian MIG-15 in Korea, accounted for 15 of the enemy without loss. Following the Panther came the famous Cougar and Tiger series of fighters, and the F111B variable-sweep-wing airplane for the United States Navy. Grumman aircraft also include the A-6A Intruder attack aircraft, the E-2A Hawkeye, the OV-1 Mohawk, the S-2D tracker, the HU16 Albatross amphibian and the Gulfstream corporate transport.

In space flight developments, the Grumman company was responsible for the design, development and construction of the Lunar Excursion Module (LEM) designed to land the first American astronauts on the moon.

On 19 May 1966, Grumman retired as chairman of Grumman, but was elected honorary chairman for his lifetime, remaining as a director until 15 June 1972. He continued to visit the company's facilities until his health began to fail in the early 1980s. After a long illness, Grumman died in Manhasset, New York on October 4, 1982 at age 87.