The Aircraft Designers: A Grumman Historical Perspective tells the behind-the-scenes story of the designers and engineers who conceived and built Grumman aircraft from the founding of the company in 1929 until its 1994 acquisition by Northrop. While Grumman aircraft have been previously documented, The Aircraft Designers focuses instead on the people, disciplines, processes, and anecdotes behind the creation of such past icons as the F6F Wildcat and TBF Avenger and modern-day weapon systems like the F-14 Tomcat, E-2 Hawkeye, EA-6B Prowler, and Joint STARS. Michael Ciminera has identified key team members who contributed to the creation and development of each new design, creating an unparalleled historical record of the aeronautical achievements of the Grumman Corporation. He has also chronicled the evolution from the aircraft design of the past, which bore the earmark of the chief engineer/designer, to today's complex aircraft systems, which require a significant team effort involving such disciplines as aerodynamics, structures, propulsion, avionics, systems analysis, software, simulation, testing, and much more. The Aircraft Designers provides a unique insight into the leadership traits, technical skills, and lasting contributions of Grumman's designers. It will stand as the definitive historical account of the people who made Grumman aircraft a reality.

My Personal Review:
I received your book on the Grumman designers for Christmas and immediately devoured it. I could hardly put it down. I found it a prodigious work and a fascinating read, for several reasons.
First, of course, you cover my Dads career--and that of the other senior Grumman engineers--in depth. Your task was partly just to record the many engineers who contributed at Grumman, but there are also overall themes, some of them surprising. One thing that struck me was the
immense difficulty of this design work. Each plane involved many subsystems. There was a need to trade off performance against weight, cost, durability, and compatibility with the carrier environment. Another theme is the rising importance of electronics. The company was early known for brilliant plane designs, but it had to build up their avionics capability to remain competitive. The aircraft finally became carriers of vast electronic systems. This introduced a whole new dimension of complexity.

Reading this story, I can imagine how many young Americans might be inspired to go into engineering themselves. You describe an exciting work environment where Grumman people tackled one challenging technical issue after another, in collaboration with talented colleagues, year after year.

These are my reflections on your intriguing book. You've shown something important here, and not only about Grumman.

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