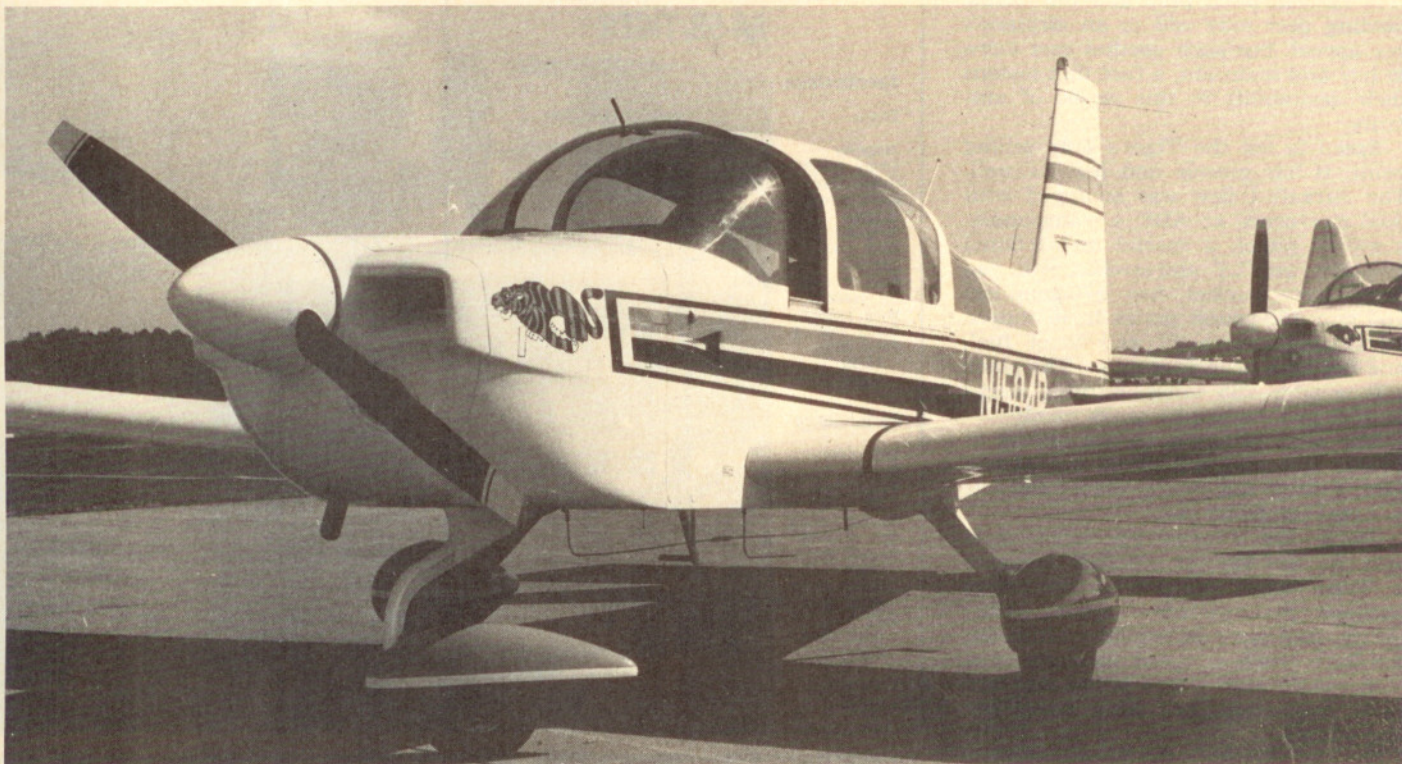


A new plane; a new home; a new force:



Remove that decal from the cowl and the Tiger could pass for the Traveler's identical twin. The real difference is under the cowl—30 more horses. Photos by the author.

Grumman American for 1975

by WILLIAM GARVEY / AOPA 480899

■ ■ Grumman American inherited an identity crisis begun when the first Yankee rolled off the American Aviation Corp. production line several years ago. The name "Yankee" became better known then than that of its maker, and now—even though Yankee production ceased some time ago—the aircraft's successors, the Trainer, Tr2, and Traveler, are invariably called "Yankee" by air traffic controllers.

Pilots add to the confusion, in radio communications, by identifying their birds variously as Grummans, Grumman Americans, Americans, or even Yankees.

At a recent sales meeting held at Grumman American's plant in Cleveland, a vote was taken among dealers, and the majority of them agreed that from that day forward—as far as radio work was concerned—they were flying "Grummans." Period.

That vote was indicative of a meta-

morphosis at Grumman American, a change that was destined to take place once billion-dollar Grumman "merged" with spunky little American Aviation early last year.

Grumman had the money, the technology, and the prestige that American could never hope to match. Grumman could make American Aviation the company it dreamed of becoming. With Grumman came stability and a sure future. But there was a catch: Grumman would be calling the shots, and American Aviation's identity would likely be eclipsed by that of its new partner. That's exactly what is happening now.

If you think about it, it makes good business sense to emphasize the Grumman name and forsake "American." But it is a little sad that American Aviation, title of the upstart plane-makers that dared give Beech, Cessna, and Piper a run for their money, is fading into history.

Although the builder's identity may be shifting, the airplanes being built

at Cleveland remain very much the children of the rakish little Yankee introduced by American seven years ago. And now, 2,100 airplanes later, a new member has been added to the clan.

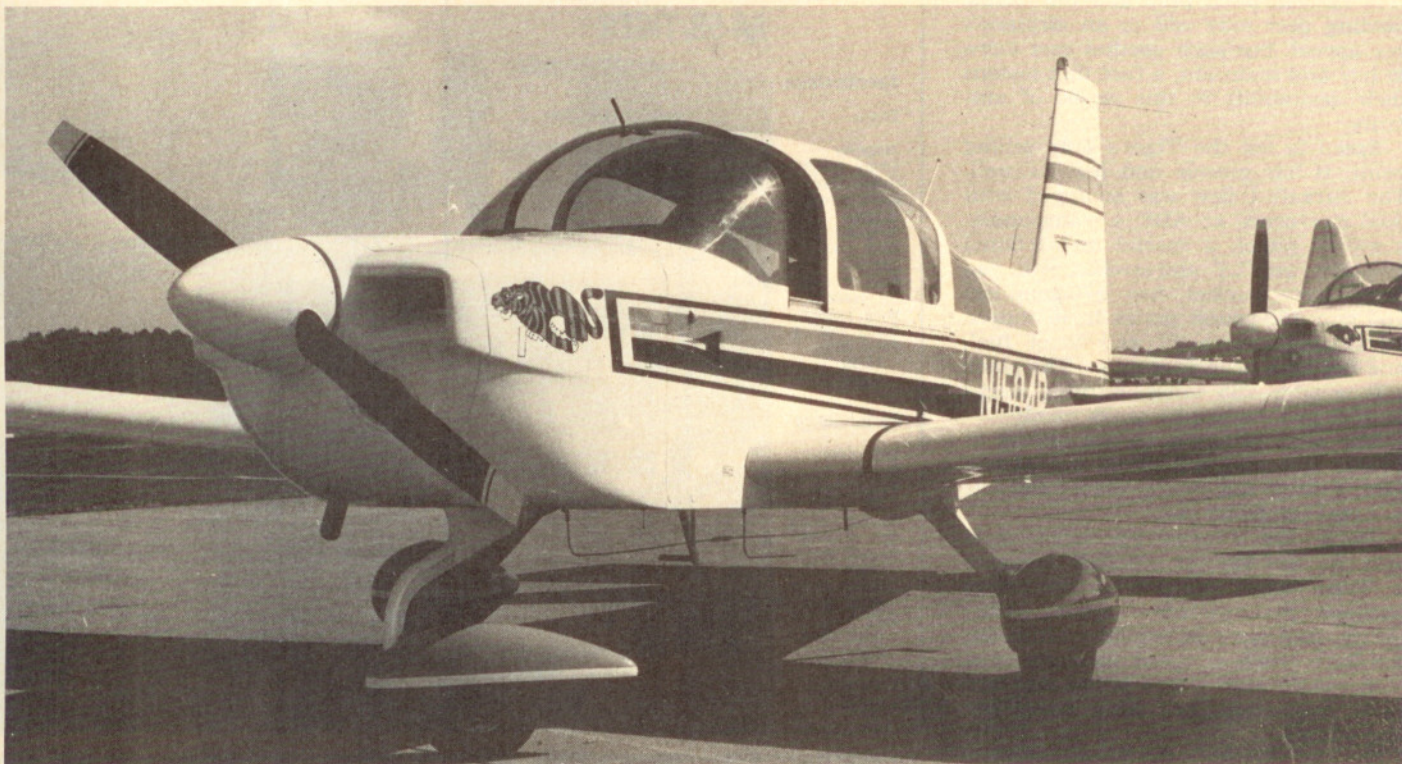
It's called the Tiger, and it moves. This new plane is really a Traveler in almost every detail, but with 30 more horses up front.

According to the company spec sheet, the 180-hp Tiger has a top sea level speed of 170 mph and will do 160 mph at 75% power at 9,000 feet. I was given the opportunity to fly the aircraft briefly and was able to get 160 mph true out of it during the downwind leg of a very wide pattern. The airplane was about 300 pounds below its gross weight of 2,400 pounds.

Mind you, this speed comes with a plane sporting a fixed-pitch propeller and wheels that drag through the air on rigid gear. The Tiger is not a sophisticated airplane, but it is as fast as—even faster than—some that claim to be.

continued

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continued

A variable-pitch prop and retractable landing gear may add to an airplane's sex appeal, but such goodies cost extra to buy and maintain, a fact that lessens their desirability in this period of austerity.

Speed is not the Tiger's only selling point; it has muscle and legs as well. The aircraft I flew was equipped with dual nav/coms, an ADF, a transponder, a switch panel, a special instructional amplifier, an ELT, and strobes. Still, you could have packed two 170-pounders and two 150-pound mates in it, topped off its tanks with 52 gallons of fuel, and not have been over gross. The plane will wander 765 miles, burning avgas at 10.6 gph, before its tanks parch.

The aircraft has a service ceiling of 14,600 feet and will climb out at 850 fpm. Takeoff run over a 50-foot obstacle is listed as 1,550 feet.

Stock, the Lycoming-powered craft sells for \$20,837. It officially becomes a "Tiger" when you add an equipment package that includes, among other things, dual controls, sensitive altimeter, nav/com, vertical speed indicator, and turn coordinator. Narco is the standard radio equipment, but King boxes are also offered.

Dealers attending the Tiger unveiling seemed quite pleased with the newcomer to the family. Some did suggest that a constant-speed prop might be a desirable option and were told that such an option was being studied.

The 150-hp Traveler, formerly the top of the Grumman American singles, has undergone some minor changes for 1975. The nose cowl on the four-place aircraft has been streamlined, and its wheel fairings have been redesigned, the result being an increase in cruise speed from 140 to 147 mph. Top speed is now 157 mph.

The Traveler lists for \$16,837 stock, and sells for \$20,137 with the basic option package, identical to that offered with the Tiger.

Changes in the 108-hp Trainer and Tr2 for 1975 are primarily cosmetic. The Basic Trainer lists for \$13,096, while the spiffier Tr2 sells for \$15,312. Both are two-place aircraft and, as with all singles built by Grumman American, they feature a sliding canopy, Imron paint, and a glass-smooth bonded skin.

The Tiger represents a determined step by the company to start filling the gaping hole that exists in its product line.

At the time of its merger, Grumman American was building five different models of airplanes: the Trainer, Tr2, Traveler, AgCat and Gulfstream II, a multimillion-dollar business jet that happened to be the company's only twin.

Obviously, the firm needed a wider range of models. Aircraft buyers tend to purchase the same make of plane they train in, and while students could train and advance in a Grumman, if they wanted more than four seats and

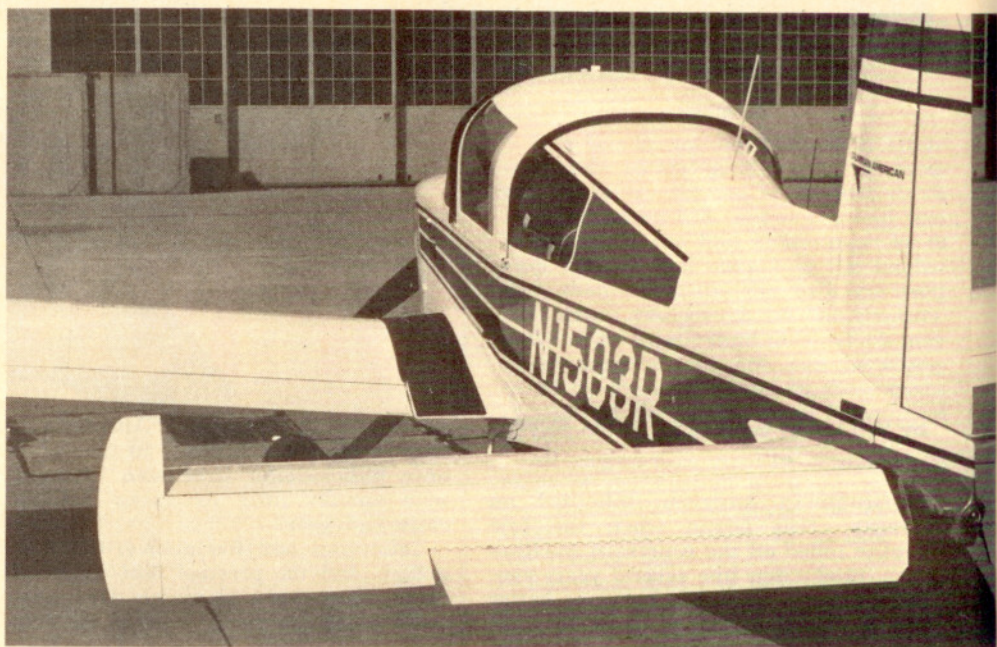
GRUMMAN AMERICAN AA-5B/TIGER

Specifications

Engine	Lycoming O-360-A4K, 180 hp
Propeller	McCaulley 73-inch, fixed-pitch
Empty weight	1,285 lb
Useful load	1,115 lb
Gross weight	2,400 lb
Baggage	120 lb
Wingspan	31 ft, 6 in
Wing area	140 sq ft
Length	22 ft
Fuel capacity (usable)	51 gal
Oil capacity	8 qt
Wing loading	17.1 lb/sq ft
Power loading	13.4 lb/hp
Basic price	
AA-5B	\$20,837
Tiger	\$24,137

Performance

Top speed	170 mph
Cruise, 75% power	160 mph
Range, 75% power (45-minute reserve)	650 mi
Service ceiling	14,600 ft
Rate of climb	850 fpm
Takeoff distance (over 50-ft obstacle)	1,550 ft
Landing distance (over 50-ft obstacle)	1,100 ft
Stall	
Flaps down	61 mph
Flaps up	65 mph



A larger horizontal stabilizer was one of the new modifications required to transform the Traveler into the Tiger.

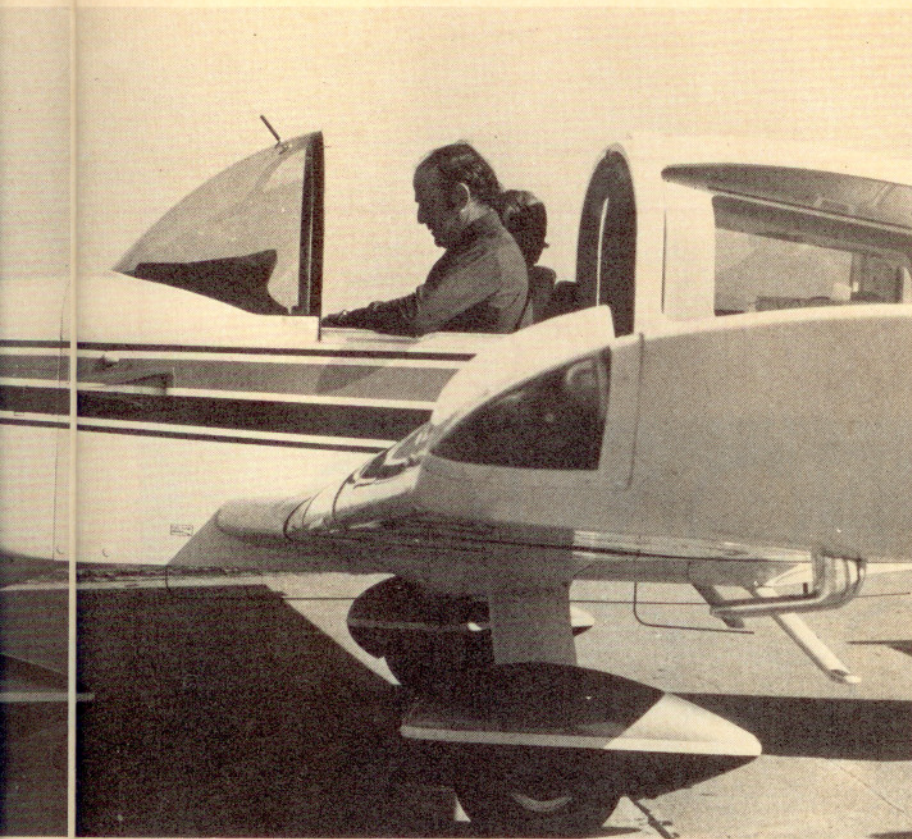
one engine (but something less than a \$3.5 million jet) they would have to spend their money elsewhere. The Tiger is Grumman American's first move to keep the money in the family; slides were shown of the second.

Grumman engineers are now building a light twin, and dealers attending the sales meeting were treated to a slide show featuring the prototype. What they saw was an engineless, bare aluminum hulk resting on spindly legs. Even

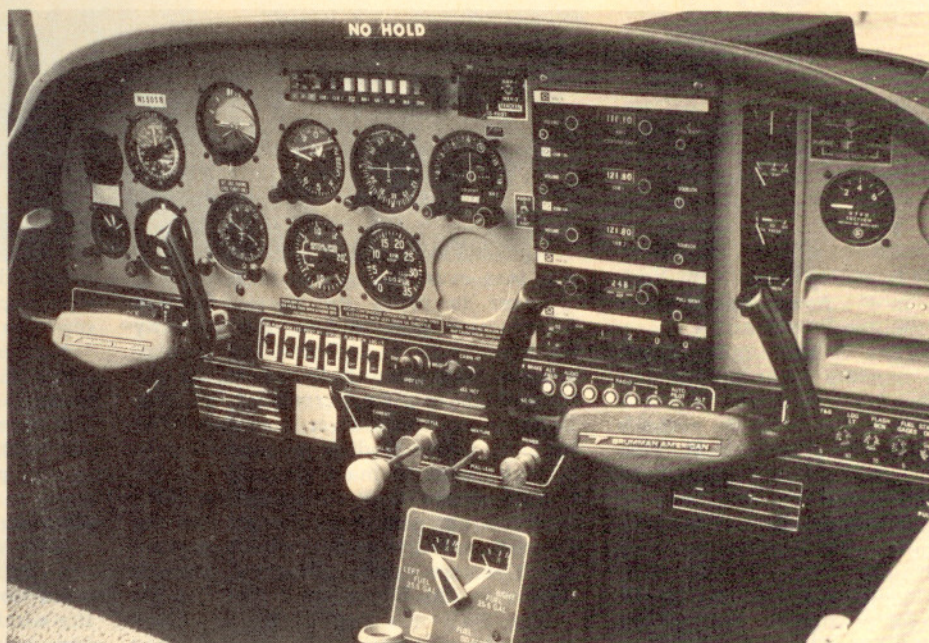
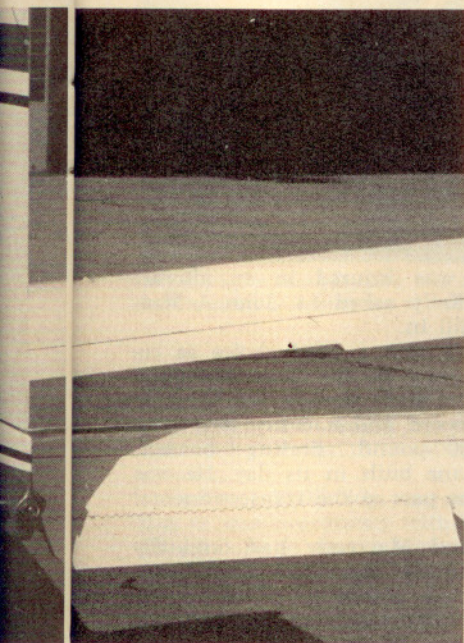
though it was still an embryo, it was quite streamlined and undoubtedly will be born a screamer. The prototype should be completed and flying next month, and production could begin as early as 1976.

This twin will be comparable in size to a Piper Twin Comanche and will be priced to compete with high-ticket singles like the Beech Bonanza.

Corky Meyer, a former Grumman vice president who was recently installed as



The new Tiger retains distinctive Grumman American features such as sliding canopy, rivetless finish, and lots of speed.



The Traveler and the Tiger share the same panel (but the Tiger's airspeed pointer moves farther to the left).

head of Grumman American, said that ultimately "we're going to have a complete line of aircraft. It may be by merger or may be by development, but we're going to have a complete line."

Meyer also told the dealers that the decision had been made and approved by his superiors to move the entire Grumman American operation from Ohio to Savannah, Ga., where the Gulfstream II is built. This move, he said, would eliminate the duplication that

exists at present with two separate manufacturing facilities. It was also another indication of the influence Grumman is exercising over the company.

Further Grumman influence was evident in another vote taken by the dealers. Names such as "Trainer" and "Tr2" are hardly inspirational. Meyer suggested that henceforth Grumman American planes should be named after cats of the wild, and that the Tiger was a

good beginning. The dealers liked the idea, which Meyer couldn't help but note was in "the Grumman tradition."

Grumman Hellcats, Bearcats and Wildcats preyed on the likes of Zeros and Bettys a generation ago. The warbirds are gone now, but the bladed Grumman cats are back. One Grumman American official said the Tiger "looks like a Skyhawk killer to me," an observation that met with a hearty round of applause. □