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RECEIVED  
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TIGHAR

Mr. Rob Gerth  
Total TV  
1349 Michaels Avenue  
Norristown, Pa. 19401

Dear Mr. Gerth:

Herewith enclosed is the piece I did for Orbis, but before I comment on that writing, I have some observations about the TIGHAR material which you should consider and/or discuss with the TIGHAR people.

On Page 10 of the TIGHAR presentation, it is stipulated that with respect to McKean and Gardner Islands "each has environmental features which could easily mask the presence of an aircraft. Both are uninhabited, and neither has, since 1937, hosted activity which precludes the possibility that the Lockheed is there."

Whoever wrote those sentences apparently was unaware of some quite seminal information.

In addition to the overflights by the planes of U.S.S. COLORADO in July, 1937, McKean and Gardner Islands (along with the rest of the Phoenix Group) were thoroughly surveyed in 1939 by U.S.S. BUSHNELL. The BUSHNELL survey of McKean was extensive. The island and surrounding reefs were carefully studied and mapped. The BUSHNELL surveyors found ruins on McKean which dated back to the establishment of the Phoenix Guano Company. These were the same ruins reported by John Lambrecht, who was the Senior Aviator of U.S.S. COLORADO during the 1937 search. Some of the walls of the buildings were still standing; in fact, the Navy men found a brass plaque which claimed McKean for the U.S. in the name of the Phoenix Guano Company.

At Gardner Island in 1939, U.S.S. BUSHNELL found the island in possession of 80 colonists from New Zealand. The New Zealanders had blasted channels through the reefs and had cleared part of the lagoon which they said was to serve seaplanes of British Pacific Airways.

The officers of U.S.S. BUSHNELL did not agree that New Zealand or Great Britain had a legitimate claim to Gardner as the island had been discovered by an American in 1825. BUSHNELL did not directly challenge the occupiers, but conducted its own survey, which included the logging of a steamer, NORWICH CITY, which had grounded itself on the western shore of Gardner. It was the same vessel the three flyers from COLORADO (Lambrecht, Short and Fox) had noted during the Earhart search in 1937.

The apparent point is that both McKean and Gardner have been surveyed and occupied extensively since 1937, and it would seem obvious that if the wreckage of Earhart's Electra is in the vicinity that it must be underwater. There is still the possibility that some artifact might be found on the reefs or in the lagoons. Those areas should receive the most tenacious research.

MCKEAN and GARDNER were visited several times during World War II by U.S. Navy ships and the islands were overflown by both U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force planes. Immediately after the Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor, Japanese ships shelled U.S. facilities on Howland, Baker, Johnston and Canton Islands. The U.S. forces at Canton and Enderbury were naturally concerned about the possibility of the Japanese establishing a presence on other of the Phoenix Islands.

MCKEAN and GARDNER were surveyed several times again in the late 1950's as Canton became a tracking station for the Pacific Missile Range, and they were surveyed again in the 1960's when Canton Island was given the added assignment of monitoring U.S. space efforts.

I realize that what I have written above is scarcely supportive of the conclusions promulgated by TIGHAR, but they are facts which should be considered where a legitimate search effort is concerned.

I was fortunate to become the personal friend of both Captain John Lambrecht, USN, (Ret.) and Captain William Short, USN, (Ret.), who were two of the three Senior Aviators aboard U.S.S. COLORADO during the '37 Earhart search. I corresponded extensively with Captain Leonard O. Fox, USN, (Ret.), the third of the flyers, but we did not achieve personal contact.

Unfortunately, all of the gentlemen are now deceased. John Lambrecht died in 1972. Bill Short left us in 1986, and Oran Fox died in 1977.

At the time of the Earhart search, these men were not new graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy and Naval Aviation Schools. Lambrecht was 34 years old in 1937. Fox was 32, and Short was 28. Lambrecht was Naval Academy Class of 1925, and he had 12 years in Naval Aviation by 1937.

I make this point because it has been alleged that the U.S.S. COLORADO flyers were virtually aviation cadets, who thought of the Earhart search as some kind of lark.

All of these gentlemen agreed that I held their feet to the fire with respect to their search of the Phoenix Islands in 1937, yet all of them maintained steadfastly that they could not have missed the Earhart plane on any of the Phoenix Islands and that the only sign of life was in 1937 was on Hull Island.

I was so insistent with the three Captains because of the work Fred Hooven and I had undertaken and Fred Hooven's emerging conclusion that McKean and Gardner Islands were the most logical forced landing sites for the Earhart plane.

Because of our voluminous research and Fred Hooven's computer studies conducted at Dartmouth, my attention fixed upon the reef and sandbar areas between Howland Island and the Phoenix Group.

When I learned from the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office that the reefs and sandbar, which had been declared non-existent in 1937 by U.S.S. COLORADO, had been sighted and plotted in 1943, 1944, 1945 and 1954 (although they had not been landed upon and investigated), I held the collective feet to the fire again and received unanimous agreement that the reefs and sandbar must have been missed during the 1937 search. The reason was a common recollection of numerous rain squalls in the area being searched. It was uniformly concluded that while they had made a good effort to be sure the area had been thoroughly searched, it was now obvious that the reefs and sandbar "were hiding out somewhere in the midst of one of those rain squalls."

From long questioning of Lambrecht, Short, Fox and Rear Admiral Walter Combs and Captain Robert Sleight (both had been Ensigns and Assistant Navigators aboard U.S.S. COLORADO in 1937), I learned that Captain Wilhelm Freidell, USN, the then commanding officer of U.S.S. COLORADO, had not spent more time seeking out the elusive reefs and sandbar because it was damned dangerous charging around with a battleship in waters where poorly charted reefs exist.

The knock against the reefs and sandbar has always been that the U.S.S. COLORADO planes couldn't find them. Added to that were the many statements that reefs were an improbability because the Earhart plane could not broadcast if it was in the water.

I had accepted the latter view until I located Joseph Gurr, the man who had installed the radio equipment aboard the Earhart plane. It was Gurr who made the alterations in the plane's radio capabilities so it could broadcast from the water in emergency.

Lockheed DID NOT KNOW the plane's radio capabilities, and the statements that came from Lockheed were based on totally out-of-date information. They simply didn't know what Gurr had done,



and no one had the good sense to seek out Gurr before going public; in fact, Courtland Gross, the big cheese at Lockheed was still trying to find out what the plane's radio capabilities were months after the disappearance.

Paul Mantz did not know, either, what Gurr had done. He never spoke to Gurr. Mantz, as was his wont, told every reporter that would listen that he knew for certain Earhart could not broadcast if the plane was in water. It was an extraordinary disservice to his long-time friend. How could Mantz have known? He had been dropped from the Earhart flight after the crackup in Honolulu. He had no idea of the changes Gurr had made. As "Kelly" Johnson (Lockheed's resident genius and the real technical advisor to the Earhart flight) told me in 1967, "We didn't need Mantz anymore."

Mantz bitterly told me in the early 60's that he had never understood why he was shut out of the Earhart flight after the Honolulu crackup. "The only time I got to speak to Amelia before the final flight" he said, "was through a wire fence at Lockheed in Burbank."

In 1982, after working together for sixteen years and collecting thousands of formerly classified documents along with the recollections of several hundred persons who had somehow been connected with the flight or the subsequent search, Fred Hooven had reached the conclusion of the Phoenix Islands with the focus on McKean and Gardner. I was also convinced of the Phoenix area, but my attention was commanded by the reefs and sandbar.

That year I was invited by Claudia Oakes of the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum to speak at an Earhart Symposium to be held at NASM in D.C.. I agreed, and I asked Fred Hooven to prepare and copyright his conclusions. I also asked Joseph Gurr to place his recollections on record. At the time of my presentation at NASM I gave the writings of Fred Hooven and Joseph Gurr for inclusion in the Earhart files of NASM.

During my live presentation at the Earhart Symposium, I discussed both Fred Hooven's and my Phoenix Islands information. The presentation was videotaped, and I understand that copies can be obtained from Claudia Oakes at NASM should you want one.

In 1982, I was experiencing some rather serious health problems, and it appeared that I might have to abandon further effort on the Earhart matter. That is the reason I wanted the information with NASM. I was hopeful that SOMEONE would put things together and decide to mount a real effort at McKean, Gardner and at the reefs and sandbar. Apparently TIGHAR is serious. I've had enough of the con men, scammers and dilettantes to last me the rest of my days, and that is why I had a strong, initial negative reaction. I did not know that TIGHAR had found Fred Hooven's material and was using it as the basis of its conclusions.

Fortunately, my health has improved tremendously, and I have been able to go ahead with another book on Earhart. I am about six weeks away from completing it. When I have the galleys in hand, I will be happy to send a copy to you if you wish.

I hope you appreciate that I cannot even begin to scratch the surface in a few pages and tell you the events, persons and records which have altered my thinking from THE SEARCH FOR AMELIA EARHART in 1966. The Orbis article may explain a few things.

There are several other items with respect to the TIGHAR prospectus.

I call you attention to Page 39 which features a graph depicting the Pan Am and Coast Guard (Howland Island DF) bearings which seem to point to the possibility of the Earhart plane having landed southeast of Howland Island.

I am herewith attaching a copy of a Fred Hooven graph which he prepared May 1, 1982, for the material of Fred's that I gave to Oakes at NASM.

It is obvious TIGHAR has used the Hooven graph, but the 201 degree DF bearing from Pan Am at Midway has been deleted. Also the TIGHAR graph does not depict the 337 reciprocal of the Howland Island bearing. I hope they did not do that in order to make a firmer case.

In any honest effort, potential supporters should be given all available information. It is true that DF bearings of the period were not considered to be accurate to within five to ten degrees if the bearings were obtained from considerable distance.

While I am enthusiastic about most of Mr. Bray's article, which I read several months ago in Lockheed Horizons, I am less than impressed with his comments about Clarence L. "Kelly" Johnson. He apparently never managed to see Johnson in person. I had the happy fortune to have been invited to personally meet with Mr. Johnson at the famed "Skunk Works" in 1967 and again in 1969. We also engaged in considerable correspondence in 1970, 1978 and again in 1982.

Mr. Johnson was a little mysterious during our first meeting in December, 1967. He greeted me warmly and took a photo from his desk which showed him and Amelia together. He said if Earhart were carrying aerial cameras it was news to him and he doubted it very much. He talked about training AE in heavy-load takeoffs and indicated that she had groundlooped one of the planes they were using for practice at Burbank. He detailed the capabilities of the plane. Said he knew nothing about a Japanese connection. When I asked him, "What was the degree of U.S. Government in her flight," he turned mysterious. He replied, "I don't think I should discuss that." Then he said, "Gary Powers has an office

down the hall. How long do you think it will be before his full story is told?"

When we met again in 1969, he still said he didn't think he should talk about government involvement in the Earhart flight. He reiterated that point to me in several letters in 1970. By 1978, he simply ignored that question. Then in 1982 he wrote, "I don't know of any connection between our government and Miss Earhart." I still don't know what to make of his changed attitude. By 1982, the effort of Elgen Long and the 99's and Muriel Morrissey and Carol Osborne and others to make a pure folk hero of AE was well underway, and perhaps Mr. Johnson just decided upon the old intelligence axiom, "No one has a need to know." Perhaps none of us will ever know the complete truth. Johnson, by the way, fired Powers in 1970 at time Power's book OPERATION OVERFLIGHT was published. Apparently Powers got to tell the truth and it wasn't very well received in some quarters.

By the way, in Johnson's last letter to me, he stated, "Miss Earhart was badly lost far North of her proper course. My computations of her flight time and fuel consumption indicate that she ran out of fuel completely while many miles from Howland."

That certainly cannot be construed as support for any Phoenix Island theory.

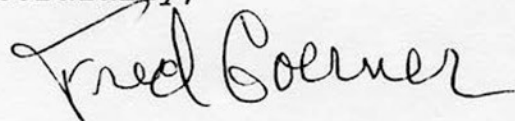
Well, I can't go on here forever. I have to get back to my book.

As I mentioned, a copy of the Orbis article is enclosed. There are a couple of errors that are of my British editor's doing, such as the 1500 horsepower engines instead of 550. But what the hell, that's the way of the publishing world.

If there are typing errors in what I have written above, please forgive because I have no intention of proofing the whole thing.

Good luck. God bless. And send me a card when you get back from the Phoenix Islands.

Most Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred Goerner". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Fred Goerner".

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