

FREDERICK ALLAN GOERNER

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San Francisco, California 94118

Monday, August 24, 1992

Mr. Richard E. Gillespie
Executive Director
TIGHAR
2812 Fawkes Drive
Wilmington, Delaware 19808

Dear Mr. Gillespie:

I apologize for the delay in answering your letter of August 11, 1992.

The week-long periods of chemo deposit me upon my posterior, and it takes several weeks after each one to begin to regain strength.

Your good wishes for my recovery are gratefully received. If it proves that I have been given additional time upon this earth, the credit properly belongs to Dr. Paul Sugarbaker, who heads The Cancer Institute at Washington, D.C. Hospital Center. It was he who performed the fifteen-hour operation in March of this year during which he removed my spleen, gall bladder, half of my stomach and a goodly portion of intestines. He even removed my liver from my body, scraped it clean of the cancer and replaced it where it resumed its function, and he removed 20 pounds of cancerous tissue which had approached my lungs and heart.

We often wonder about what impact there is from the billions of dollars which have been spent on cancer research over the years, and Paul Sugarbaker's experimental techniques provide but a few answers. My travail has caused me to research current developments in this field of medical research, and I believe I can authoritatively report that extraordinary advances are being made which will bring important progress in treatment to cancer patients within the next few years.

There will never be a "magic bullet" which will end cancer in humans. Rather there will be hundreds, perhaps thousands, of "magic bullets" which will target the incredibly wide diversity of cancers which afflict human-kind.

I recognize that my reprieve may prove to be brief, but I have become convinced that even as a statistic there will be some value to my having endured what can only be considered a massive affront to the human body and spirit.

What I have written above is surely of minor interest to you, so to the subject of your letter.

You are correct in your assumption that my attitude toward you has been affected by my belief that you ignored my 1990 letter to you and did not share the information it contained with your membership or the media. It seemed to me (indeed it still seems) that you have been highly selective in the research you have chosen to report, ignoring or deprecating any and all information which might question the conclusions you wished to promulgate to the media and your supporters.

You seem to have drawn a conclusion that I am somehow involved with Ms. Carol Osborne and Mr. William Prymak.

That is a totally false assumption.

Ms. Osborne calls me from time to time, asking me for information about various aspects of the Earhart matter, but we have no cooperative association of any kind. As I do with many other people who contact me, I have simply answered questions to the best of my knowledge. Aside from the fact that Ms. Osborne has written a book about Earhart and apparently is a close friend of Earhart's sister, Muriel Morrissey, I know nothing of her intentions. I suspect that she has an interest in publicizing her book and that she may be planning a sequel to that book or an update of same. It is of no concern to me. Incidentally, Ms. Osborne's book is NOT without merit. It is a valuable contribution to an understanding of the era during which Earhart came to her fame.

With respect to Mr. Prymak, I have never seen, spoken with nor corresponded with the gentleman. Also, I have never been a member or a supporter of The Amelia Earhart Society. Mr. Prymak continues to send me copies of his Earhart publication in which he sometimes quotes me (from mainstream publications) without permission, but I have been too busy with my health problems and other matters to concern myself with what I consider to be a group revolving around the excesses of Joseph Gervais and Rollin Reineck. I have NOT joined any of the Earhart organizations, and I have not permitted my name to be used by any of them.

The fact that Osborne and Prymak did not attend the recent gathering in Oakland of the Aviation Historical Society had absolutely nothing to do with me. I could not care less about their motivations for attending or not attending ANYTHING.

I do know Mr. Elgen Long fairly well, and although I do not agree with his Earhart theory, I do consider him and his wife, Marie, to be honest researchers. We do not collaborate. The Longs have been trying to raise a good deal of money for some time to support their Earhart endeavors, but I have no part and no interest in their efforts.

Beware, Mr. Gillespie, that you do not see a cabal where there is none. It is a common phenomenon among people who have attached themselves to the Earhart mystique and who strive to make capital from such involvement. I freely admit that I have been given to such reactions myself on a number of occasions over the last thirty years.

Mr. Gillespie, you allege that I made "...phone calls to Life Magazine to urge them not to carry our story."

That statement is wrong in the extreme. Mr. Barnes of Life Magazine called ME. He pleaded for information about the history of the Earhart matter and for knowledge of the Hooven Gardner and McKean Islands theory. He wanted dental charts for Earhart and Noonan, and he wanted to know what I thought about the possibility of anything connected with Earhart and Noonan being found on Gardner Island by your search effort. I RETURNED his telephone calls, and I wrote him several letters at his behest.

I told him exactly what I thought (and still think) as I would with any fellow journalist. I told him the Earhart saga is a "journalistic tar-baby", and that any claims to solutions to the Earhart mystery should be submitted to the most rigorous examination before they are printed as fact. I stated that no "pieces of metal that MAY have come from the Earhart plane" and that no "remains which MIGHT be those of Earhart or Noonan" would suffice it. Additionally, I wrote to him that the ONLY acceptable proof about the fate of Earhart and Noonan will be identifiable numbers from the props, engine or instrument panel of the Electra or human remains which can be identified by dental charts. Numbers from other aircraft parts which were used on Electras as well as many different aircraft would not prove ANYTHING.

Your comments with respect to the work of Fred Hooven are not acceptable to me and they would not be acceptable to anyone who knows anything about research.

The fact that Wilhelm Friedell and the Colorado planes were ordered to search the Phoenix Islands and for the reefs between Howland and Canton Island does not obviate the facts of HOW the theory of McKean and Gardner, which was laboriously put together by Fred Hooven through the 1970's and early 1980's, reached you and your TIGHAR organization.

I find it both amazing and amusing that Willi and Gannon are grouching in the press about your having taken the bulk of the credit from them. Willi got the entire Hooven product from Hardon McDonald Wade, Jr., who is now publicly grouching because Willi supposedly purloined the information from him when in fact Wade obtained the Hooven material from The Air & Space Museum, and then put it to his own purposes without crediting Hooven.

Mr. Gillespie, you maintain that the TIGHAR effort with respect to Earhart has been a thoroughly honest endeavor.

When you acknowledge Fred Hooven as the progenitor of the McKean and Gardner Island theory, then I will accept that as a reality, and I will be willing to share additional information with you. Despite what you state in your letter, I have not been aware of a SINGLE public mention by you of Fred Hooven's contribution.

I fear, Mr. Gillespie, that you may have painted yourself into a corner from which there little room for escape. You have publicly stated that with your Gardner Island findings the Earhart mystery is solved, and the recent Hillier television documentary trumpeted via its promotion that the final answers were contained therein.

Such is not the case as I believe you know very well, but now you are stuck with trying to prove claims which already have been widely made to the general public as fact.

Your critics, each with his or her own motivations, will not ease their challenges. You know that many of those critics have motivations which are self-serving, and you might wish that they would simply go away. But they will not. I have experienced the extraordinary vitriol of some these people over the years, and I know they will continue to challenge all conclusions save their own until irrefutable evidence is finally produced.

At the very least, please send me a postcard when you receive this letter so I may be sure that it has been properly delivered.

I do not wish you ill, Mr. Gillespie, but I would like to see you deal more forthrightly with the information concerning Gardner Island and its history.

Stay well! And be happy. My elders always told me how brief life really is, but I have only recently come to a full understanding of that fact.

Sincerely,



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P.S. In reading over what I have written above, I realize that some of it sounds rather hard-bitten. I sense how very much you want the Gardner Island theory to be accepted as fact. A turn in the limelight of national media can be an extraordinary aphrodisiac, but it can also become a negative and something of a joke if basic integrity is not carefully husbanded. How you handle the many challenges which surely will be issued will determine your own reputation and the future of TIGHAR. I would urge you NOT to be selective with respect to the history of Gardner Island. There were many, many facts which finally convinced Fred Hooven that Gardner could not have been the landing site for the Earhart plane. To ignore or belittle those facts is to call into question the basic objectivity a researcher such as yourself is supposed to maintain. Please believe me when I say I have learned some of those lessons the hard way. As soon as possible, you should submit the piece of wreckage from Gardner to Lockheed for appraisal. Harvey Christian, who headed quality assurance for Lockheed at the time of the Earhart flight, is still alive and in control of all his faculties. Also, that piece of wreckage should be submitted to the U.S. Air Force. If Ernest Zehms, who headed the Coast Guard Loran station on Gardner during WWII, is correct in his recollection that pieces of metal from a crashed B-25 were flown to Gardner from Canton Island aboard a Navy PBY, the USAF can surely determine if your piece of wreckage is from a B-25 or not. To procrastinate or offer reasons why such investigations cannot or should not be accomplished is to call into question TIGHAR's and Richard Gillespie's willingness to pursue the truth. You may perceive what I have written above to be hostile, but I can only attempt to assure you that it is solid advice based on nearly forty years of news reporting. Several of the people who attended the recent Aviation Historical Society function have told me they were highly suspicious of the reasons you advanced for NOT taking the piece of aircraft metal to Lockheed. Any perceived reluctance on your part to have such studies done will only provide ammunition to your critics.