

man in a lifetime. Some of them were uncanny with truth and fact—and without explanation.

He has been besieged, hoaxed, heckled and strangely stirred by thousands of correspondents in every corner of the world. Open-minded, he has attended seances, read horoscopes, corresponded with mediums. He has received rambling messages written by spirit hands; has examined sketches of Amelia Earhart, handwriting, maps—all supposedly emanating from unworldly sources. And once, through one of the cruelest plots ever born in a criminal mind, he was actually convinced that Amelia had been found alive—and brought to New York.

The deluge began less than three hours after that last pitiful radio whisper from a plane floundering in the sky south of Howland Island. The Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* heard that SOS. George Putnam heard it, crouched over a receiver in a Coast Guard station at San Francisco. The whole world soon heard it.

Here is the first telegram, copied verbatim from the original in Mr. Putnam's personal files which, never before shown to anyone, were made available to this writer:

NEW YORK N. Y. DL
OPERATIONS MANAGER OAKLAND AIRPORT.
PLEASE GIVE THIS INFORMATION TO
PUTNAM. EMINENT PSYCHIC SAYS BOTH
SAFE ON REEF LESS THAN 200 MILES
NORTH WEST HOWLAND ISLAND. PLANE
PRETTY WELL CRACKED UP BUT BOTH
SAFE. MISS EARHART IN BETTER SHAPE
THAN NOONAN. ITASCA WILL FIND
THEM IN MORNING. HASTE IS NECESSARY
BUT THEY WILL BE RESCUED.
PLEASE TAKE THIS FOR WHAT IT IS
WORTH FROM A WELL WISHER.

The *Itasca* did not find them the next morning. Or the next. Or ever again. But the telegrams and letters and phone calls kept coming. By nightfall operators at the airport telegraph office had stopped sealing the messages; they gave them to Mr. Putnam in bundles. The telephone company installed a special

wire. Postmen trudged a weary path to the Coast Guard office and his rooms at the airport hotel in Oakland. Today—more than two years later—those messages are still coming.

In those first anxious hours and days, George Putnam was surrounded by friends and well-wishers, most of whom, openly skeptical, saw something grimly humorous in the flood of bizarre messages. He himself was faced with conflicting emotions—an ingrained doubt of the supernatural, a natural curiosity heightened by grief and worry. AE was down. And any thread was a line of life. . . .

George Putnam tried to answer every wire and letter, tried to run down every meager clue that offered any hope at all. By the end of the third day the task assumed staggering proportions. He had gone without sleep for 70 hours, had taken virtually no food and friends tried to intervene.

"Now look, George," said Dr. Harry Clay of San Francisco, an old friend, "you can't stand much more of this. And anyway, you certainly don't believe in that psychic stuff."

"Believe?" George Putnam said wearily. "At a time like this, Harry, I'm willing to believe almost anything that might help."

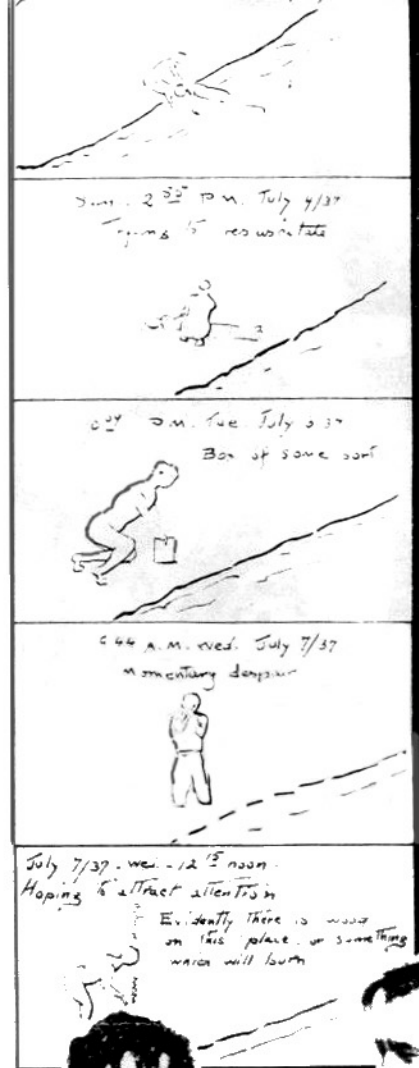
"But those letters are based on dreams. On spook voices. Probably fakes."

"Perhaps, Harry. You're a doctor. You know how close dreams are to reality. And who really knows how to find the dividing line?"

Dr. Clay smiled at his friend and patient.

Above right are "human radio wave pictures" sent to Mr. Putnam by a Detroit woman.

This picture of AE and Noonan was taken shortly before their disappearance on July 2, 1937.



STILL ALIVE ?

by DEAN S. JENNINGS

All material used to illustrate this article from George Palmer Putnam.

More than two years ago America's most famous aviatrix disappeared somewhere in the vast Pacific. But, even today, there are strange reports that Amelia Earhart still lives. We offer the weird facts for what they are worth.