

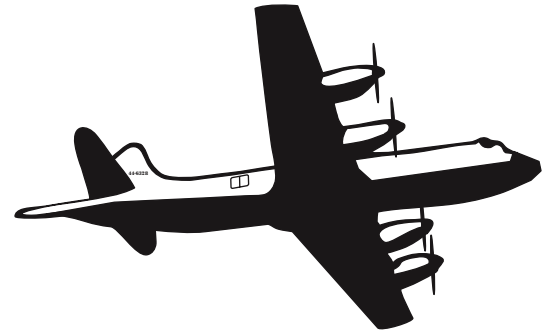
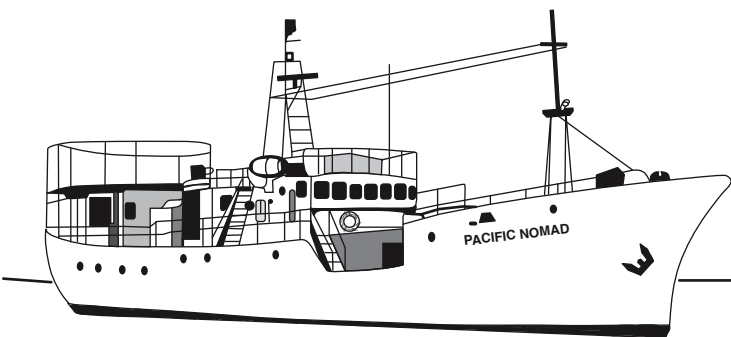
TIGHAR TRACKS

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP FOR HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RECOVERY

EARHART PROJECT RECEIVES DIPLOMATIC APPROVAL

The Republic of Kiribati has granted full approval for the Earhart Project's September expedition to proceed. This was an absolutely essential prerequisite to conducting operations in the Phoenix Islands. The research, organization and ethics of the entire project went through U.S. State Department channels to President Ieremia Tabai and were reviewed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tarawa (the capital of Kiribati). It was a lengthy and, at times, nerve-wracking process, but in the end we received not just permission but a pledge of assistance from the government of Kiribati.

Official endorsement from Tarawa also clears the way for the release to TIGHAR of recent low altitude aerial photography of McKean and Gardner Islands taken by Lockheed Orions of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. These will be of tremendous value in planning our search of the islands and their surrounding waters.



Another key step in mounting the expedition has been accomplished with the chartering of what is without doubt the finest research vessel in that part of the world. Pacific Nomad is a 115-foot motor vessel operated by Marine Pacific Ltd. of Fiji. She has supported several U.S. government sponsored scientific projects and has the rare capability of serving as a completely self-sufficient base for our 18 person team during the five weeks we'll be at sea.

Final selection of the expedition team is now nearly complete, and notifications will go out soon to all who have asked to be considered. In some ways this is the toughest part of our job. Assembling the most competent team possible is not necessarily the same as choosing who wants to go the most.

The Earhart Project is on schedule and on budget. Sound research has produced a reasonable hypothesis, and we have assembled the tools and approvals necessary to test it. All that remains is to complete the funding. The support of TIGHAR's members has brought the project this far and will, we're sure, help take it all the way to the Phoenix Islands and back — perhaps with the answer to the fate of Amelia Earhart.

CAST YOUR BREAD UPON THE WATERS

In the autumn of 1987, TIGHAR received a telephone call from the office of the Governor of Maine, concerning an inquiry that office had received about Project Midnight Ghost. They really didn't know what to do with it — some man in the Philippines seemed to want to know a great deal about the project. They did, however, know how to reach us. So we took down the address, which was long and complicated, and there was no question about it: the inquirer was a Brother in a Marist monastery in the far south of the Philippine archipelago. We sent him a TIGHAR Tracks, and some reports on Project Midnight Ghost, and a letter telling him what we had done just that fall. We also mentioned that we had a member in the Philippines, one John Humphreys, an Englishman who worked (for that matter, still does) for the Ford Foundation in Manila.

In July of 1988, we sent John Humphreys' renewal notice to him, with a note scribbled on the bottom of it mentioning our correspondence with the Marist Brother. We received back from John not only his renewal (which is always nice) but a note, and then a telephone call (NOT from the Philippines) describing his encounter with Brother Reginald. We were so touched we asked him to write up the story for the next issue of TIGHAR Tracks, and here it is:

In March of this year business took me to the town of General Santos in the Southern Philippines. Having to interview several persons at the local college, which is run by a religious order, I was invited to spend the night in the guest room of the Brother's "convento."

On the evening of my arrival I was sitting in the Brothers' common room, reading and drinking coffee, when a young Brother whom I had not met previously joined me. After we had introduced ourselves he asked me if by any chance I knew another man named Humphreys who lived in Manila and who belonged to "some group that restores old airplanes." He was asking on behalf of Brother Reginald, he said; Brother Reginald would very much like to get in touch with this man. I hastily explained that I was, indeed, none other than (to my knowledge) TIGHAR's only Philippine-based member. I asked how he had come to learn my name.

He told the following story. Brother Reginald was one of the oldest Brothers in General Santos. He had lived in the Philippines for decades. A regular listener to Voice of America broadcasts, he had recently heard a program about Project Midnight Ghost; having been born and raised in that part of New England which we now suspect to be the last resting place of Nungesser and Coli, he had been avid for more details of the search. He had written to the Governor of Maine, whose office had put him in contact with TIGHAR, which in turn had given my name. Since I live in Manila, at the other end of the archipelago from General Santos City, it was pure luck that my work took me not only to Brother Reginald's town, but precisely to the guesthouse of his Order. As soon became evident, there was little chance that he would ever have visited me in Manila.

The young Brother asked whether I would mind taking the time to meet Brother Reginald. I told him I would be delighted. He led me out of the guest

quarters, and several blocks through the lively streets. We eventually turned into the garden of a small house and entered a ground floor room through a side door. Brother Reginald was sitting on his bed. I went over and shook hands with him.

He was obviously a very sick man. Although he rallied to greet me courteously, and his eyes were full of lively intelligence and humor, he was too weak to leave his bed, and I spent the next hour sitting at his side while we talked about the mysterious fate of the White Bird. He kept grinning with disbelief at the fact that I had landed unexpectedly on his doorstep just as he had given up all hope of ever meeting me; he seemed to regard it wryly as a sort of minor miracle.

Brother Reginald ... seemed to regard it wryly as a sort of minor miracle.

Although not previously an aviation enthusiast, his imagination had clearly been caught by the quest for those two vanished French heroes. His enthusiasm was a cheering sight as he pored over TIGHAR expedition reports and plotted crash sites on a map of New England. Afterwards I wondered at the roots of his fascination — perhaps it was merely that the episode reminded him of his far-away home, but I think it more likely that what engaged his interest so intensely was a curious amalgam of the courage of the two pilots, the abiding mystery of their disappearance, and the intelligence and dedication of the effort to throw light on their fate.

I didn't want to tire Brother Reginald, so I left him just as the sun was setting, with a promise to send him, from Manila, all the additional TIGHAR material on Project Midnight Ghost. Three days later I was back in the capital, and the same day I sent Brother Reginald a packet of TIGHAR documents by air courier.

About a month later, I received a letter from one of the Brothers in General Santos. It announced with sadness the peaceful death of Brother Reginald, and thanked me both for visiting him, and for sending him the additional materials. They had arrived two weeks before his death, and he had been thrilled to receive them. I was very glad to read that. Although I only met him once, I will remember for a long time that frail but brave old man, sitting in his bed in that sunset room, gazing at the drawing of the White Bird, and the inscription of Charles Nungesser's famous motto: "The strong heart does not fear death, even in its most terrible aspects."

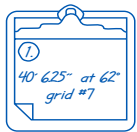
—John Humphreys
Member #206



*À cœur vaillant rien d'impossible
même dans ses aspects terribles.*

PROJECT MIDNIGHT GHOST

On May 8, 1927, twelve days before Charles Lindbergh's New York to Paris flight, Charles Nungesser and François Coli vanished "like midnight ghosts" attempting the same feat in the opposite direction. For over 60 years the disappearance of the French heroes and their white biplane l'Oiseau Blanc has been one of aviation's great riddles. For the past four years TIGHAR has been conducting an investigation to determine whether a remote section of the Maine woods holds the answer.



Notes From the Field

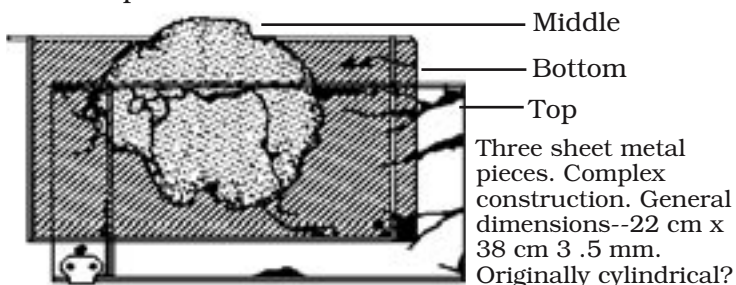
Expedition XVI — April 7 - 30, 1989

Pushing the Line

Last fall Expedition XV confirmed that around 1974 someone used horse drawn logging equipment to haul something very heavy (perhaps airplane wreckage) out of the Round Lake Hills — an area where no logging has been done since before 1927, and where tradition holds that the airplane came down. Six weeks of intensive operations by TIGHAR volunteers backtracked that hauling job two thirds of a mile through the forest by the excavation of an intermittent but distinct line of metal debris. Most of the material recovered consists of broken or discarded relics of the hauling operation itself (sled hardware, horseshoe nail, a tobacco tin, a shirt button), but two pieces, the now famous "gremlins," remain unidentified and are suspected of being aircraft hardware which fell off the load. This spring we continued to push the line, tracking the route back toward its origin point which, if we're correct, will also be the crash site of l'Oiseau Blanc containing positively identifiable remains. This time we were able to trace the line of travel another third of a mile to a point where it seems to make a sharp turn not necessitated by the terrain. At more than a mile from the logging road where they ended up we suspect we're now close to their starting point.

The Flounder

We also excavated another artifact along the trail which, so far, has defied identification. In accordance with established TIGHAR procedure we've assigned it a nonsense name so as not to prejudice the identification process. We'd like to hear from anyone who can help.



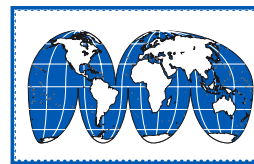
History Held Hostage?

A \$1,000 reward for information leading to the recovery of pieces of the airplane was put up by TIGHAR member H.N. Crecelius of Stockton, California. We'd never tried this approach (couldn't afford to) and it did bring an interesting, though still unresolved, response. A message was left on our answering machine sometime during the night of April 20. A middle-aged man's voice with a Downeast Maine accent said, "I think I've got somethin' you've been lookin' for for quite a while, ... but ... uh ... ten thousand and we'll talk. I'll be in touch." That was all and so far, he hasn't been in touch. Hoax or genuine greed?

More Media Frustration

On May 3 NBC's television series Unsolved Mysteries finally got around to airing the piece they filmed with TIGHAR in Maine over 18 months ago. Despite the delay we didn't receive confirmation of the date in time to do a mailing to the membership. On top of that the show gave out an incorrect phone number and mailing address to people who called their 800 number with information. We have, however, salvaged some leads with the help of the producer and we're working on those now.

Now in its fifth year, TIGHAR's search for the White Bird has become something of an epic in itself. We're determined to see the investigation through, to find the answer to what happened in this remote patch of wilderness. The work continues.



Quick & Dirty Aviation Archeology News in Brief

The Second Yamamoto Mission Association (SYMA) was forced to postpone its trip to Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, when civil war broke out there shortly before the group's planned departure date. The nine person team, five of whom are TIGHAR members and graduates of the aviation archeology course, plan to examine the wreckage of the bomber in which Admiral Yamamoto died and settle once and for all continuing controversy concerning the crash. Meanwhile, reliable sources report that one wing of the Betty was moved to Japan shortly before the recent violence erupted. SYMA has tentatively rescheduled its expedition for mid-June in the hope that the political situation in PNG will have stabilized by then, and that further removal of wreckage will not have occurred before the archeological work can be accomplished.

STRICTLY BUSINESS

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The dream of TIGHAR's lifetime has now come true with the addition to our business properties of a computer—a Mac II with a Laser printer, to be exact. We'll be using the computer to solve all kinds of business problems and make some things possible that were beyond our reach until now. For instance—we have repeatedly been asked for a membership directory. You will shortly receive a form asking you how you wish to be listed in such a directory, which we hope to have ready to mail by the middle of July.

This is the first issue of the new TIGHAR Tracks. We are, with great regret, abandoning the high-tech, glossy format of our magazine, which is prohibitively expensive, and going to a format for which we can produce complete camera-ready on our computer, and which we will publish every six weeks. We know we haven't been living up to our members' hopes and expectations with the magazine, because no matter how fancy it is if it doesn't get published it's no good to anyone. The new TIGHAR Tracks will be sent first class. We'll be looking for comments and criticisms, so please toss in your dime's worth (inflation, you know) as often as you like. The next issue will be mailed on June 30; deadline for letters, comments, drawings, articles, or information is June 21. Let us hear from you!

TIGHAR (pronounced "tiger") is the acronym for The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, a non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting responsible aviation archeology and historic preservation. TIGHAR's activities include:

- Compiling and verifying reports of rare and historic aircraft surviving in remote areas.
- Conducting investigations and recovery expeditions in cooperation with museums and collections worldwide.
- Serving as a voice for integrity, responsibility, and professionalism in the field of aviation historic preservation.

TIGHAR maintains no collection of its own; neither does it engage in the restoration or buying and selling of artifacts. Instead, the foundation devotes its energies to the saving of endangered historic aircraft wherever they may be found, and to the education of the international public in the need to responsibly preserve the relics of the history of flight.

TIGHAR Tracks, published nine times each year, is the official publication of The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery. A subscription to TIGHAR Tracks is included as part of membership in the foundation (minimum donation \$35.00 per year). The editors welcome contributions of written material and artwork. Materials should be addressed to: Editors, TIGHAR Tracks, 1121 Arundel Drive, Wilmington, DE 19808 USA. Telephone 302/994-4410. Photographs and artwork will be returned on request.

Editors: Patricia R. Thrasher and Richard E. Gillespie

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I would like to join TIGHAR. Enclosed is my donation of —

- \$35.00 for a one year membership \$60.00 for a two year membership
 \$125.00 for a five year membership \$1,000 for a life membership

As a member of TIGHAR, I will receive the following benefits:

- Annual subscription to TIGHAR Tracks
- Membership patch, directory and catalog
- Expedition and educational opportunities

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Please return this form with your membership dues to TIGHAR, 1121 Arundel Drive, Wilmington, DE 19808 USA; Telephone 302/994-4410, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST/EDT, M-F. ALL DONATIONS TAX-DEDUCTIBLE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE LAW.

