

# TIGHAR TRACKS

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP FOR HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RECOVERY

## IT'S ALL AHEAD FULL FOR THE EARHART PROJECT



### Funding

On-schedule departure of The Earhart Project expedition is now virtually assured. Through specially arranged bridge loans TIGHAR's member sponsors have made it possible for the project's funding needs to be met while major corporate sponsorship is finalized. Individual TIGHAR member support is now more important than ever, both to repay this vital assistance and to make sure that when the TIGHAR team departs California on Labor Day, September 4, 1989, it goes with the best preparation possible.

### Photos

An important part of that preparation is accurate, up-to-date reconnaissance of the islands to be searched. Through the courtesy of the Royal New Zealand Air Force we now have excellent aerial photography of McKean and Gardner. TIGHAR salutes Wing Commander Des Ashton and Five Squadron RNZAF.

### Fiji

For a host of logistical reasons the expedition's forward base will now be at Suva in Fiji rather than Pago Pago in American Samoa. It will mean a longer sea voyage to the Phoenix group (1,000 miles), but a more convenient staging port for assembling the expedition's many components.

### Team Selection

The last batch of expedition team applicants will undergo certification and team-forging training in Wilmington, Delaware July 15 and 16. All primary and alternate team candidates are presently completing the extensive medical/dental examinations necessary for final qualification. Assembling this team has meant making many tough choices, and we want to especially thank the dedicated TIGHAR members who applied for a spot on the team but whom we are not able to take. We could fill a dozen boats with skilled, enthusiastic people. You are TIGHAR's greatest asset.

### But is AE Out There?

We'll just have to go and find out — but the many scholars and historians who have read the Earhart Project Book all seem to agree that this is the best researched and most soundly reasoned hypothesis ever presented. Use the special order form insert in this issue of *TIGHAR Tracks* to get your copy and help your foundation make aviation archeological history.



Taziman Passage, Nikumaroro; RNZAF photo taken 2/23/88 by Orion Aircraft of 5 Sqn.



## Quick and Dirty Aviation Archeology News in Brief



### A Mammoth Undertaking

On July 5 the Greenland Expedition Society is scheduled to depart once more for the ice field where last summer they proclaimed the discovery of the now famous Lost Squadron. In July 1942 six P-38Fs and two B-17Es were landed, out of fuel, somewhere on the Greenland icecap. The crews were rescued and some salvage was attempted but its extent has never been satisfactorily determined. What remained of the airplanes was abandoned on the ice, covered by the arctic snows and, so the story goes, entombed in a state of perfect preservation. One remembers the woolly mammoths frozen in Siberia whose 100,000 year old flesh fed the sled dogs of the men who found them.

The vision of Lightnings and Forts literally frozen in time moves the Greenland Expedition Society's founders, Patrick Epps and Richard Taylor, to seriously speak of flying two of the P-38s off the ice. Their announcement last summer that the squadron's resting place had at last been found under 260 feet of ice brought a cascade of media attention. Headlines such as "Ghost Squadron Found," "Lost in Artic [sic] Since 1942, Fighters, Bombers Found" and "U.S. to Thaw Planes Iced In Greenland" have captured the public imagination like a 20th century version of the legend of King Solomon's mines. But what's the truth behind the hype?

Because TIGHAR members have a more than casual interest in genuine aviation archeology, we've outlined below the facts as told to us by the expedition's leader, Norman Vaughn, and the Society's co-founder, Patrick Epps.

- Despite what was reported in the press, last summer's expedition returned with no proof that it had found the aircraft. What it found were radar targets under the ice similar in distribution to that exhibited by the airplanes in old aerial photographs. Test holes made with a steam probe at one location confirmed that something stopped the probe at 258 feet—far deeper than the aircraft were expected to be. Too deep, in fact, to obtain a sample of the obstructing material with the equipment available.
- This summer's effort will send 15 people to the ice for about 3 weeks at a cost of \$150,000. Its purpose is to do what was not done last year. A steam probe will again be used to sink a 1" to 4" diameter hole which will permit the use of a key-hole saw to obtain a metal sample. An attempt may be made to melt a 3 foot diameter hole in order to get a photograph or even lower a person 26 stories down into the glacier.

- September 1989 marks the expiration of the Greenland Expedition Society's original agreement with the Danish government for recovery rights.

Incidentally—those woolly mammoths in Siberia and Alaska, although of ALPO quality, were compressed to a thickness of about 18 inches.



### Wildcat Wreckage Wretrieved

After 45 years on a California mountaintop, the wreckage of a Grumman F4F-4 Wildcat has been recovered by members of the Planes of Fame Air Museum in Chino. Last December an expedition, led by John Maloney, spent five days collecting the wreckage, loading it on a truck, and transporting it to the museum. Special care was taken to obtain the owner's permission and to avoid terrain damage. Details of the circumstances surrounding the crash are still being researched, but the parts recovered are described as being in excellent condition, and are slated for use in the restoration of another Wildcat to airworthy condition. The Planes Fame Air Museum has an outstanding record in the safe operation of rare aircraft.

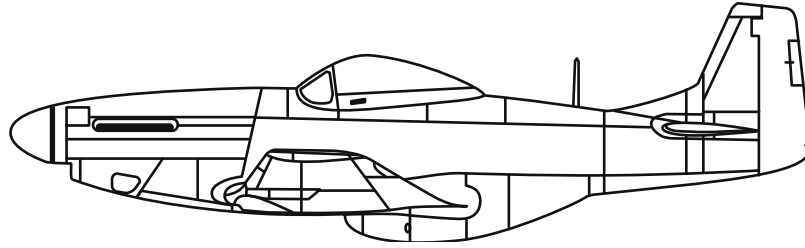
### Midnight Ghost Update

Leads continue to come in from the May 3rd airing of the NBC Unsolved Mysteries segment on TIGHAR's work in Maine. The most promising include yet another reported engine-in-the-woods sighting (this makes nine so far), and a remembered article in *Argosy* Magazine describing the discovery and possible removal of the engine of the White Bird from the Maine woods. We checked archival copies of the magazine from 1949 to 1959 and there's nothing there. Earlier and later issues still need checking, as well as copies of *True* Magazine, a similar publication. The magazines appear to be available only at the Library of Congress. Any volunteers?

The gremlins and the flounder continue to mystify experts. TIGHAR member Pete Luce recently met with the director of the Musée de l'Air in Paris and we hope to see some increased cooperation there. Meanwhile, we've made some progress on the mysterious French cigarette case allegedly found long ago in the search area. It turns out the tiny inscriptions on the inside are Japanese characters — possibly a phonetic rendering of a foreign (to Japanese) name. Hey — maybe Nungesser and Coli were captured by the Japanese and taken to Saipan!

# SPECIAL REPORT

## HISTORIC AIRCRAFT AND ADAPTIVE USE



**“Let us bend our best efforts to the saving of antiquities that they might escape the teeth of time and the hands of mistaken zeal.”**

John Aubrey, *The Stonehenge Manuscripts*, 1660.

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TIGHAR has completed a two year study of flying accidents involving historic aircraft in “adaptive use” (a standard historic preservation term for properties converted to present day use while retaining their essential historic character). In 1987 we first called attention to the alarming number of rare aircraft being destroyed in flying accidents and to the danger of increased government regulation (*TIGHAR Tracks* Vol. 3 No. 2 — Overview: The Warbird Dilemma). Since then the question of what to fly, how to fly it, and who should decide has become the most controversial issue in aviation historic preservation. The emotion, confusion, and misinformation generated by the controversy has been widespread:

Paul Poberezny, EAA, in *The Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 1988:

“... old warplanes have been involved in about a dozen accidents in the last three years.”

The correct number is 64 (sixty-four).

Ralph Royce, Executive Director, the Confederate Air Force, in *FLYING*, February 1989:

“...Royce has strong feelings about why one-of-a-kinds must be flown — ‘It’s fine and dandy to go into a museum and look at an airplane, but you’re looking at a dead airplane. We are live, living history.’”

The Confederate Air Force’s Douglas A-20 Havoc, the last airworthy example of its type, was destroyed in an air show accident on October 8, 1988.

Tom Poberezny, EAA, in *FLYING*, April 1989:

“... there aren’t many one-of-a-kind aircraft that are being flown. The laws of supply and demand take care of this situation.”

Last flying examples destroyed in recent years include, listed alphabetically: Bristol Blenheim, Bristol Bulldog, DeHavilland Comet, Dewoitine D520, Douglas A-20 Havoc, Grumman F3F2, etc.

Adding to the furor was an article in the June 17, 1989 *New York Times* under the headline Grounding of Historic Planes Urged which grossly misrepresented TIGHAR’s position on the issue.

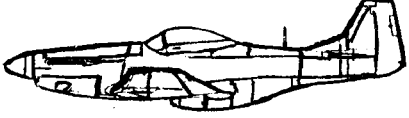
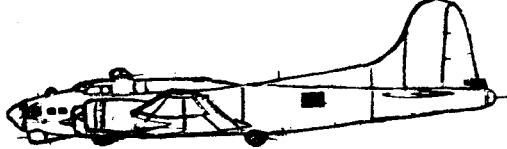
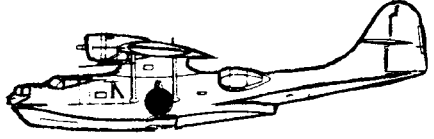

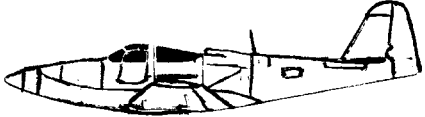
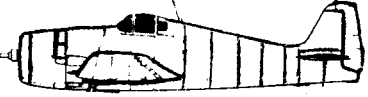
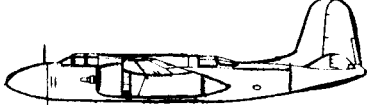

**TIGHAR is not opposed to the flying of historic aircraft.** The foundation’s official position (see back page of this section) strongly endorses adaptive use as “the most dynamic expression of aviation historic preservation.” But it’s high time that fact replace myth in the effort to keep them flying.

From some twenty pounds of computer printouts and census data assembled with the cooperation of the FAA and NTSB, as well as the British CAA (special thanks to TIGHAR member Hugh Smallwood of British Aviation Heritage), TIGHAR catalogued, categorized and compiled more than 650 accidents involving over 50 ex-military aircraft types from 1964 to 1988. We wanted some hard numbers instead of popular impressions — not only who’s wrecking what, but why and how. The answers we got were disturbing.

We do not now have the funding to produce a full report but it is hoped that the brief overview published here will heighten the awareness of pilot and public alike to the need for greater care in the management of these important historic properties.

# SOME ENDANG

At the current rate of attrition, the following American aircraft types that were in service during World War II will be extinct as flying examples withi

Type	Registered 1987*	Accidents 1964—1988†
 P-51 Mustang	159	99
 B-17 Flying Fortress	15	13
 PBY Catalina	12	14
 P-38 Lightning	12	6
 P-63 Kingcobra	5	4
 F6F Hellcat	10	5
 A-20 Havoc	4	1
 B-26 Marauder	1	1

This list addresses only one narrowly defined population of aircraft in the U.S. Recent British losses include the last DeHavilland Mosquito flying in Britain; the historic and painstakingly restored DeHavilland Comet; the last flying Bristol Blenheim; an extremely rare Vickers Varsity T1 (eleven died in this aircraft); three rare early jets; and so on.

\* **Registered 1987**—Source is the Federal Aviation Administration census for 1987. The FAA does not verify aircraft registration, so the census figures are an indication of maximum numbers of potentially airworthy aircraft in the U.S.

† **Accidents 1964-1988**—Source is a special cooperative study by TIGHAR and the National Transportation Safety Board to extract loss information on these aircraft from NTSB's database. TIGHAR has detailed hard copy on every one of these accidents.

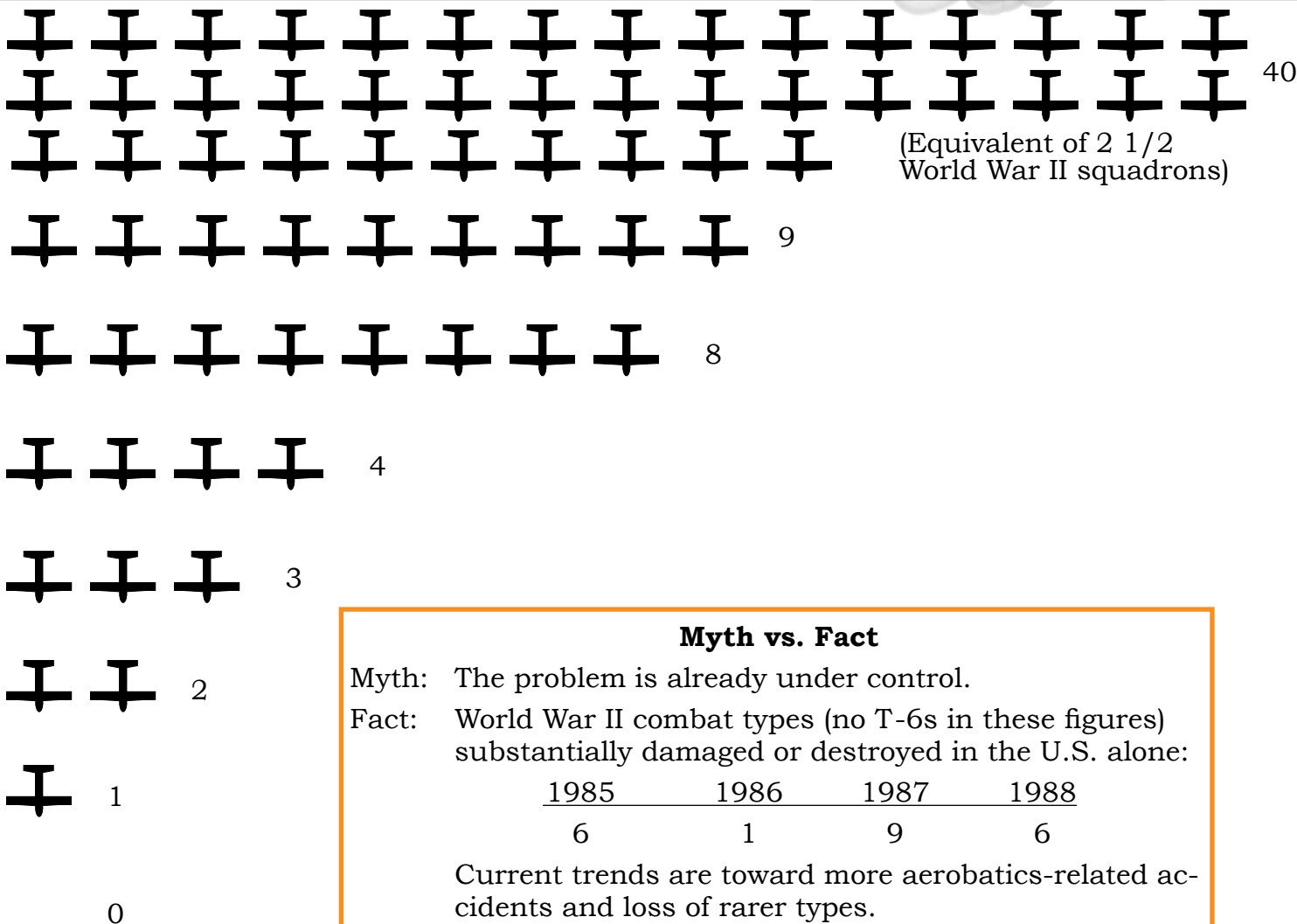
‡ **Destroyed 1964-1988**—Source NTSB. Destroyed does not mean rebuildable. It means destroyed—gone forever.

# ERED SPECIES

merican aircraft types which saw combat during  
 in two generations (about fifty years).



Destroyed  
 1964–1988‡



**Myth vs. Fact**

**Myth:** The problem is already under control.

**Fact:** World War II combat types (no T-6s in these figures) substantially damaged or destroyed in the U.S. alone:

	1985	1986	1987	1988
	6	1	9	6

Current trends are toward more aerobatics-related accidents and loss of rarer types.

**Myth:** More aircraft have been lost in museum disasters than in flying accidents.

**Fact:** Fewer than 80 aircraft of all types have been lost in museum disasters. At least 200 World War II aircraft alone have been destroyed in flying accidents since 1964.

TIGHAR's Executive Director, Richard E. Gillespie, is a trained aircraft accident investigator and served the aviation insurance industry as a risk manager, underwriter, and safety specialist for twelve years before founding TIGHAR in 1984. His extensive experience in loss analysis and reduction includes on-site surveys throughout North America, Britain, and the Caribbean on behalf of domestic and London underwriters. He holds a commercial pilot certificate with multi-engine and instrument ratings. His 4,000+ flying hours include many in historic aircraft.



**OFFICIAL POSITION OF**  
**THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP FOR**  
**HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RECOVERY**  
**REGARDING THE FLYING OF HISTORIC AIRCRAFT**

1. TIGHAR encourages and supports the responsible flying of historic aircraft, believing it to be the most dynamic expression of aviation historic preservation. The majority of vintage aircraft serve their owners and society best as airworthy examples of their types. TIGHAR heartily endorses their exhibition at public air displays and encourages its member to attend and support such events.
2. TIGHAR applauds owners and operators of historic aircraft who strive to accurately represent their aircraft within their historic context, and who recognize their aircraft as irreplaceable and therefore maintain accordingly high operational standards.
3. TIGHAR recognizes that any aircraft that flies can also be lost. The responsible flying of historic aircraft must include recognition that the time may come when a particular aircraft has achieved a degree of historic significance which precludes its being risked in flight operations.
4. TIGHAR deplores and condemns the cavalier attitudes of those pilots who put their own desire for ego gratification above their stewardship responsibility to history. The number of historic aircraft destroyed, the wanton negligence which typifies many of the accidents, and the rate at which the losses continue point dramatically to the need for a greater awareness of the basic principle of historic preservation. Our treasured rights of property were not born and cannot survive in a moral vacuum.

For additional copies of this Special Report and to learn more about how you can help, please contact:

TIGHAR  
1121 Arundel Drive • Wilmington • DE • 19808 • USA  
302/994-4410

## Book Review

### Wooden Witches

*The Earhart Disappearance: The British Connection.*

By James A. Donohue; published by Sunshine House, Inc., Terre Haute, IN 1987; 176 pp.; hardback, \$29.95.

Sir Bedevere: So therefore, logically, if she weighs the same as a duck ...

Serf: She's made of wood!

Sir Bedevere: And therefore ...

Mob: A witch! Burn her, burn her!

—Monty Python and the Holy Grail



Perhaps the key to understanding this baffling book can be found in the author's own description of it as "A story about the disappearance of Amelia Earhart and the cover-up which followed." Maybe the author never intended anyone to take this rambling, disjointed, and certainly fantastic tale as anything more than a good story. If so, then he's had the last laugh on all who lay out \$29.95 to enter a fantasy world. To save TIGHAR members the thirty bucks, here's a quick tour.

According to this book, Earhart's entire around the world flight was a spy mission, not just for the United States, but for Great Britain as well. Every seeming navigational deviation, weather delay, or mechanical problem was a carefully calculated plot to position agents Earhart and Noonan for intelligence gathering, and not just in the Pacific, mind you. Their use of Massawa airport in Italian East Africa is offered as proof of the "British Connection." The reasoning goes something like this: Because the U.S. admittedly had no interest in what the Italians were up to, but the British did make a reconnaissance flight over the area two years later, it is obvious that Earhart was spying for London.

For the ill-fated Lae/Howland flight, the author has the Electra detour all the way to Jaluit in the Marshall Islands to photograph a seaplane ramp that wasn't built until three years later, in the middle of the night with elaborate photoflash bombs, camera gear and synchronizing devices which were somehow installed somewhere when no one was looking. Then they went all the way down to Gardner Island (where's all this fuel coming from?) and from there to Hull Island where they finally landed on the beach and hooked up with John W. Jones, who was not the mild-mannered coconut planter he seemed but — you guessed it — a British secret agent. Jonesy dumps the airplane in the drink outside the reef, then spirits Earhart and Noonan off to Sydney Island where they cower in protective custody while the search is on. Then they're taken by U.S. Navy ship to American Samoa where they're secretly held in a medical isola-



tion facility on a tiny island. Noonan, we're told, died of alcoholism and Earhart of severe depression sometime in 1938.

Donohue has done a tremendous amount of archival research, and the book is loaded with facts and photographs. Unfortunately, neither the facts nor the photographs lend any credibility to his outrageous conclusions. But as we all know — it's the very absence of evidence that is the best possible proof of a cover-up. Burn her!

### Are You Certifiable?

The following TIGHAR members have completed the Introductory Course in Aviation Archeology and have received their certificate of training. A dozen more TIGHAR members will be certified at the course session in Wilmington, Delaware, on July 15 and 16. Courses will be held this winter at Owl's Head, Maine; the Liberal Air Museum in Liberal, Kansas; and the Admiral Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas. Additional courses may be scheduled according to member interest in other locations. If a museum in your local area is interested in hosting a course, please get in touch with Pat Thrasher at TIGHAR headquarters, 302/994-4410, 9-5 M-F.

Vance Blaettler, 0116	San Diego, CA
John Clauss, 0142	Homewood, CA
William Decker, 0010	Greensboro, NC
Mary Dewitt, 0704	Eules, TX
Michael D. Elmore, 0708	Claremore, OK
Veryl Fenlason, 0053	St. Cloud, MN
Douglas Fuss, 0344	Arlington, TX
Norman Genkinger, 0705	Casselberry, FL
Douglas Gurney, 0333	Montgomery, AL
Suzanne Hayes, 0672	Rhinebeck, NY
Daniel Koski-Karell, 0602	Washington, D.C.
Jessica Krakow, 0299	San Francisco, CA
Richard Lindsey, 0579	Houston, TX
James L. Martin, 0656	South Bend, IN
Russell Matthews, 0509	Princeton, NJ
Ronald A. Nyborg, 0378	Seattle, WA
Katherine Oakley, 0706	Winter Springs, FL
Alan Olson, 0119	El Cajon, CA
Michael Potts, 0677	Wichita, KS
Bill Prymak, 0710	Broomfield, CO
Lois Rose, 0381	Andover, NJ
Richard Schreiber, 0491	Morgantown, WV
Shirley Schreiber, 0491	Morgantown, WV
Matthew Spitzer, 0645	Hayward, CA
Patricia M. Ward, 0321	Baton Rouge, LA
C. Bart Whitehouse, 0657	Littleton, CO
Diane Whitehouse, 0657	Littleton, CO
Vernon Wiese, 0728	Beavercreek, OH
Michael D. Williams, 0371	Highland, IN

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If your membership expired in February, March, April, or May, and you have not renewed, this is the last *TIGHAR Tracks* you will get. If you have recently received a renewal notice and just haven't gotten around to sending a check—hey, give us a break, folks! Those twenty-five cents-es add up in a hurry! We depend on you to keep us strong and growing, so send that renewal in and stay tuned.

Please note the membership directory information form enclosed as part of this *TIGHAR Tracks*. All TIGHARs whose memberships are in good standing on July 25, 1989, will be included in the directory. Please fill out the form carefully if you want anything changed in your name, address, telephone, or other information. If we don't hear from you by July 25, we'll assume it's o.k. to publish what we have.

We are currently in the process of scheduling Aviation Archeology courses for the autumn, winter, and spring. At this time a course is scheduled for the Owl's Head Transportation Museum in November, and tentatively for the Liberal Air Museum in Kansas and the Admiral Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas sometime this winter. If you would like to sponsor a course in your town, please get in touch with us ASAP.

**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.

