

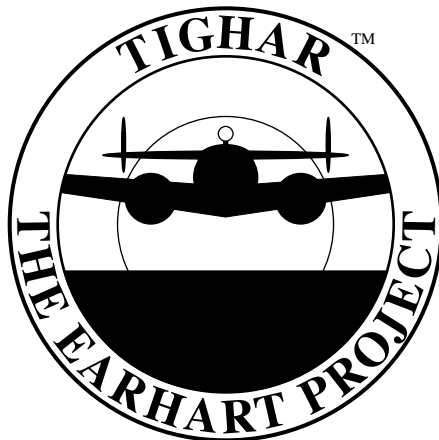
TIGHAR TRACKS

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP FOR HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RECOVERY

TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS

The money has been raised, the team assembled, and the thousand and one details have been handled. As this TIGHAR Tracks goes to press, The Earhart Project is set to depart Los Angeles September 4 on an expedition which will take a specially selected TIGHAR team to one of the most remote places on earth. When they return October 16 they will have covered over 12,000 miles by air, 3,000 miles by sea, and what will probably seem like twice that many miles on foot or underwater. They may also have solved the most legendary of aviation mysteries -- the disappearance of the Earhart/ Noonan flight.

Building on the work of TIGHAR members Tom Willi and Tom Gannon, the foundation has spent the past 15 months researching, planning and fund-raising for an expedition to the Phoenix Islands in the central Pacific, now part of the Republic of Kiribati. There the team will conduct search operations, concentrating on the island of Nikumaroro (formerly Gardner Island), an uninhabited, densely vegetated atoll about 3.5 miles long, sur-



rounding a lagoon about one mile wide. To get there the team will fly to Fiji, then board the 115 foot support vessel Pacific Nomad for the 1,400 mile voyage to Nikumaroro. Three weeks of simultaneous operations by land and underwater search teams, supported by documentation and communication teams, will determine whether or not Nikumaroro holds the key to the Earhart mystery.

This project is a true landmark in the fledgling science of aviation archeology. For the first time a large, highly qualified team will carry out a logistically complex operation in a remote and hostile environment, purely in the interest of aviation history. Funding for the project has not come from investors who hope to acquire an aircraft, or from individuals looking for fame or an adventure vacation. Instead, the contributions, large and small, have come from people who share TIGHAR's commitment to responsible aviation archeology. Their reward is the knowledge that they have struck a blow for the intelligent pursuit of historical truth, and blazed a trail for others to follow.





THE TEAM



Selection of the TIGHAR members who make up the expedition team has been an eight month process during which dozens of applicants have been evaluated and qualified. Criteria for selection were:

- Membership in TIGHAR.
- Completion of TIGHAR's Introductory Course in Aviation Archeology
- Ability and willingness to contribute time and expertise for the entire six week expedition.
- Participation in team forging and selection evaluations.
- Completion of rigid health and physical examinations.
- Waiver of all liability for injury and assignment of rights to any property discovered.

Financial considerations had no bearing on team selection. The expedition team will be comprised of the following:

Project Director

Richard E. Gillespie
Wilmington, DE

Expedition Director

Patricia R. Thrasher
Wilmington, DE

Archaeologist

Thomas F. King, Ph.D. #0391
Silver Spring, MD

Physical Sciences

Jessica Krakow, Ph.D. #0299
San Francisco, CA

Medicine

Dr. Tommy L. Love, D.O. #0457
Ft. Worth, TX

Search Operations

Joseph M. Lative #0185
(underwater)
Dade City, FL

Observer

Kautuna Kaitara
Deputy Chief Customs Officer
Republic of Kiribati

Julie Williams, R.N. #0763
Bossier City, LA

Navigational Research

Thomas A Willi, CDR USN (Ret.) #0537
Ft. Walton Beach, FL

H. J. "Dutch" Kluge #0174
(underwater)
Homestead, FL

Communications

C. Bart Whitehouse, Ph. D. #0657
Littleton, CO

Photography

Russell Matthews #0509
Princeton, NJ

LeRoy Knoll #0750
(underwater)
Garden City, KS

Thomas F. Gannon, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.) #0539
Ft. Walton Beach, FL

Mary DeWitt #0704
Euless, TX

William Decker #0010
Greensboro, NC

Diane Whitehouse #0657
Littleton, CO

Michael J. Bowman #0758
(underwater)
Marina del Ray, CA

Veryl Fenlason #0053
St. Cloud, MN

Team Forging

Richard A. Schreiber, Ph.D. #0491
Morgantown, WV

John Clauss #0142
Homewood, CA



THE LOGIC

At 8:44 a.m., 2 July 1937, the time of Earhart's last confirmed in-flight radio transmission, signal strength indicated that she was within 100 miles of Howland Island. In that message she stated that she was "on the line of position 157/337 running north and south."

Known fuel data for the flight indicated that she had approximately two hours of fuel remaining at that time.

Four islands fall along that line of position within two hour's flight time: Howland (we know she didn't land there), Baker (nor there); McKean (maybe, but it's small, barren and uninviting), and Gardner.

Over the next three days at least 24 radio transmissions believed to originate from the lost plane were received. Lockheed engineers insisted that the aircraft must be on land. Direction Finding bearings were obtained on six of the signals. All cross in the area of Gardner Island.

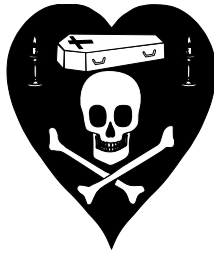
The U.S. Navy's initial search in 1937 focused on the Phoenix Islands. The aerial search of Gardner Island reported "clear signs of recent human habitation" on an island that was uninhabited at the time. Despite that, no search party was put ashore nor has anyone ever searched there for Amelia Earhart since then.

In later years a small (80 people), abortive Gilbertese colony and a wartime U.S. Coast Guard radio station (25 men) resulted in anecdotal evidence which seems to support the hypothesis that Earhart ended up on the island.

In short, no one ever really looked in the most likely place. The TIGHAR expedition will correct that oversight.



PROJECT MIDNIGHT GHOST EXPEDITION XVII



November 20 --
December 9, 1989

Immediately following the Introductory Course in Aviation Archeology at Owl's Head, Maine, November 18 & 19, graduates and other TIGHAR members will get a chance to put their skills to use in the seventeenth TIGHAR field operation in search of l'Oiseau Blanc -- the White Bird of Nungesser and Coli which vanished en route from Paris to New York twelve days before Lindbergh's transatlantic flight. Now in its fifth year, TIGHAR's Project Midnight Ghost has painstakingly pieced together the jigsaw puzzle of the Frenchmen's fate on a fog-shrouded hillside in the wilderness of eastern Maine. The final and most important pieces of the puzzle are still missing, and this fall's effort will try to find them.

Meanwhile, new evidence continues to trickle in. Two witnesses have recently come forward who claim to have seen the aircraft in its final moments of flight. Robert Magoon was 14 years old in May of 1927. Standing in the dooryard of his parents' hilltop farm in Crawford, Maine, he heard a strange sound in the northeast and, as he turned to look, was amazed to see a "big white airplane" burst into view over the trees. The plane flew directly over the farm and began a turn to the right. Robert's father ran into the yard shouting, "That plane is right on the treetops!" He was convinced the plane was about to crash because its engine was "skipping" badly. Evelyn Magoon, now Sharpe, was 10 years old and sick in bed that afternoon. Her father's excited voice brought her out into the yard just as the plane passed over the farm a second time. "Father was talking so loudly -- I got out of bed and went

outdoors and saw that plane flying. It looked like it had circled, and I walked down by the barn and watched it go southwest out back of our pasture. It was just above the trees. It was white -- strange looking."

So convinced were the Magoons that the strange airplane was about to crash that neighbors were recruited and the pastures and blueberry fields to the immediate southwest were searched for the plane. Nothing was found. About five miles southwest of the Magoon farm, three hills rise beside Round Lake.

Evelyn Magoon Sharpe now lives in Augusta, Maine. She has been aware of TIGHAR's search for several years but didn't volunteer her information before because she was sure we were on the right track and assumed we'd find the plane just fine without her getting involved. She only came forward at her granddaughter's insistence after the Unsolved Mysteries segment was aired on NBC in May. Her brother Robert didn't come forward at all. He lives in Connecticut and had never heard of the search. We got in touch with him through Evelyn.

Members who wish to participate in Expedition XVII should call or write TIGHAR headquarters after October 22 (we'll be on the Earhart Project expedition until then). Completion of the Aviation Archeology course is strongly recommended (see registration information in this *TIGHAR Tracks*) but not required. Searchers arrange their own transportation to Machias, Maine, and pay their own room and board in local motels. Expedition XVII is a Category I expedition open to any member in good standing and good health. You may come for all or any portion of the search, but three days is a practical minimum limit. All participants are asked to contribute \$100 toward the expedition's general administrative costs. *Please note: November is a good time to conduct search operations in Maine due to good visibility in the woods. It's also cold, wet, and deer season. If you think this is going to be fun you're as warped as we are.*



ADAPTIVE USE

Laurels and Losses

In the last issue of *TIGHAR Tracks* (June 1989, Volume 5, No. 2) we came down pretty hard on operators of flyable historic aircraft whose egos and ignorance have destroyed hundreds of irreplaceable airplanes. But while the losses have been and continue to be unnecessary and unconscionable, not all who fly rare aircraft are irresponsible or uninformed. Indeed, the majority of operators take great care to maintain and fly their aircraft in a manner befitting the historic significance of the machine. Among the collections with outstanding safety records are Kal-Aero of Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the National Warplane Museum of Geneseo, New York. There are many others and in upcoming issues of *TIGHAR Tracks* we'll be recognizing those whose professionalism sets the standard for safe, responsible adaptive use of historic aviation properties. We'll also continue to chronicle and condemn needless destruction.

Déjà Vu

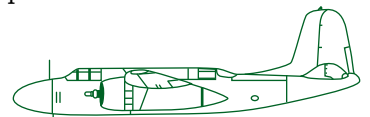


Like a tragic echo from nearly half a century ago, the word from Britain this summer is that losses are heavy. Details are still sketchy but a Spitfire has gone in -- pilot fatal

-- aircraft destroyed. Reportedly this was a recently completed seven figure restoration. No word yet on probable cause. Also in Britain, a French registered Flying Fortress cartwheeled and burned on take-off during the filming of "The Memphis Belle." True to B-17 tradition the crew escaped without serious injury even though the airplane is a total write-off.

Cry Havoc

Last October the last flying Douglas A-20 Havoc was destroyed at the annual Confederate Air Force air show in Harlingen, Texas. The medium bomber fell out of formation and flew into the ground, leading to widespread speculation that its 70 year old pilot had suffered a heart attack.



TIGHAR has learned from informed sources that the inspection of the wreckage found no fuel in either engine and no rotational propeller damage at impact despite adequate uncontaminated fuel in the tanks. In layman's terms, this airplane suffered a double engine failure in-flight due to fuel mismanagement. What is not clear is how the pilot could make such an horrendous error in an airplane with independent fuel systems for each engine and then fail to fly the aircraft to a survivable crash landing. The NTSB is investigating.

STRICTLY BUSINESS

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If your membership expired in April, May, or June, 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.

All of you who have been looking daily for your membership directory -- we ran into a software glitch which prevents the compilation of such a directory. As soon as we return from the Pacific new software will be brought on line to correct the problem, and the directory will be published as soon thereafter as possible -- with luck by mid-November. Sorry for the false alarm, but even Microsoft was surprised by the hitch.

Aviation Archeology courses are now scheduled for the autumn and winter. Please see the insert for specific information about the courses at Owl's Head, Maine; the Liberal Air Museum, Liberal, Kansas; and the Admiral Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas. If you would like to have TIGHAR present a course in your town, please get in touch with us.

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 —

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35.00 for a one year membership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$60.00 for a two year membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$125.00 for a five year membership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$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.

