

# “Qualitative Data”

*Amelia Earhart—Case Closed?* by Walter Roessler & Leo Gomez with Gail Lynne Green. Aviation Publishers, Markowski International Publishers, Hummelstown, PA: 1995. Soft cover, \$16.95.

This year’s what-really-happened-to-Amelia-Earhart book was co-authored by two retired airplane mechanics who are quite convinced that she simply ran out of fuel and “plunged into the Pacific” not far from Howland Island. Right up front they avow that “This book is not based upon speculation. Everything you are about to read is derived from factual information.” To further assure the skeptical reader, the book leads off with endorsements by Earhart biographer Doris Rich (“... a riveting account of exactly what happened”), National Aerobatic Champion Patty Wagstaff (“The authors give us the facts...”), EAA Chairman Paul Poberezny (“...the most accurate philosophy of what happened...”), and retired Brigadier General Chuck Yeager (“...factual and very good. It contained all qualitative data”). Whew! After all that, it’s really a shame that the book is so riddled with factual error.

Some of the mistakes are as obvious as they are harmless (Earhart’s first flight across the Atlantic was in 1928, not 1929). Unfortunately, however, this sloppiness carries over into substantive issues and presents a distorted and inaccurate picture of the circumstances surrounding the disappearance. For example, the authors state:

On June 28, they [AE & FN] took off for Darwin, Australia. They stayed two days, apparently for some much-needed rest,

since no mechanical repairs were reported. While there they shipped their parachutes back to the U.S., to save weight. On June 30 they arrived in Lae, New Guinea...

Well—that’s not what happened. Earhart and Noonan did not stay at Darwin for two days. They departed at 0600 the next morning. During their short stay, some repairs were, in fact, accomplished and are well documented. Also, Earhart picked up (rather than discarded) two parachutes which had been shipped to Darwin (see *TIGHAR Tracks* Vol. 10, No. 1 “Hit Or Myth”). She arrived at Lae, New Guinea on June 29, not the 30th. In short, the authors got everything wrong except the date of arrival in Darwin.

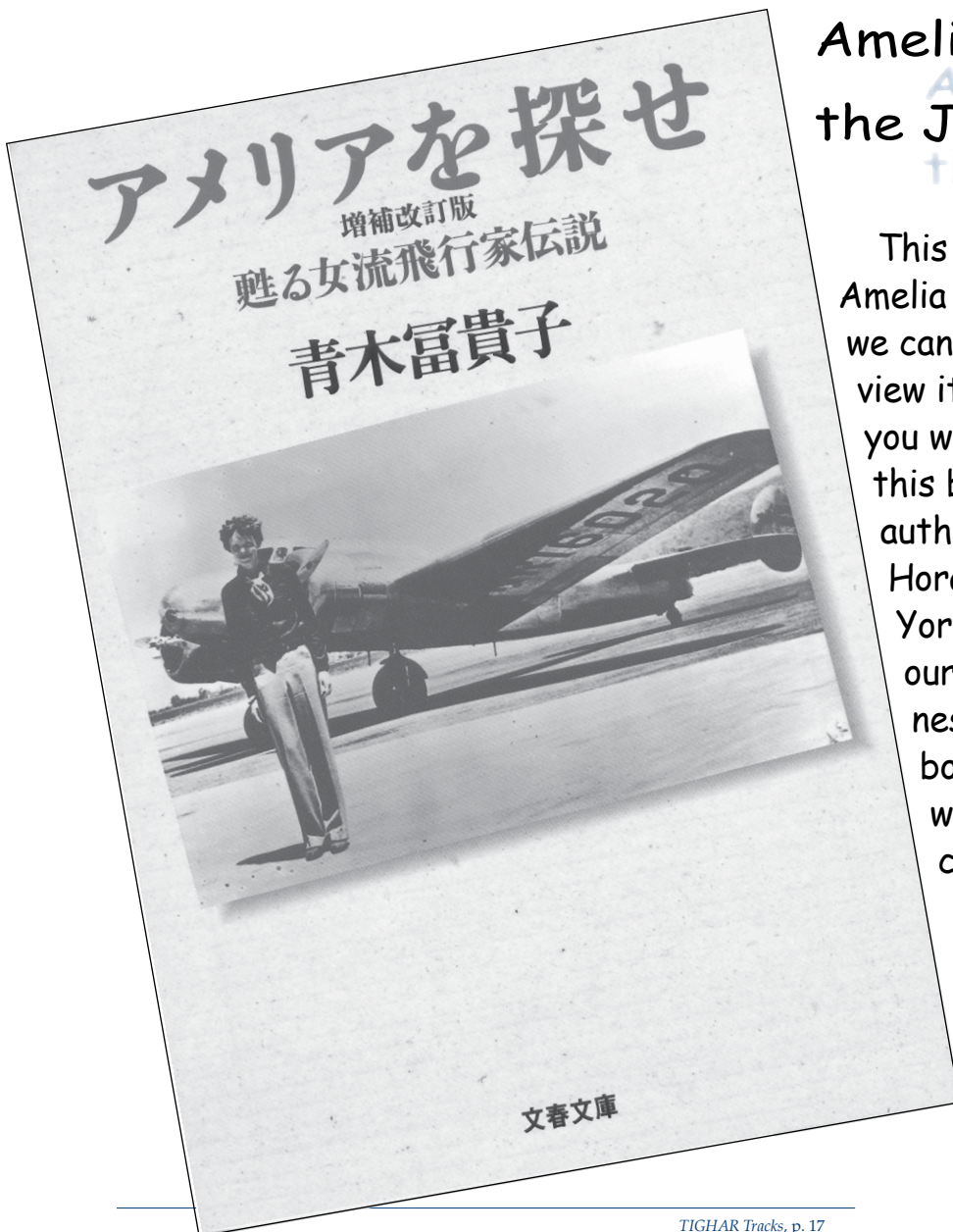
It’s impossible to reach good conclusions from bad facts. Roessler and Gomez think that the Electra’s Radio Direction Finding loop antenna was non-rotatable (even though there is plenty of newsreel footage which shows it being rotated); they think the airplane’s maximum fuel capacity was 1202 gallons (although Bureau of Air Commerce records clearly show that it was 1151 gallons); they think the airplane left Lae with 1,150 gallons of fuel aboard (although both of the two expert contemporaneous written accounts say 1,100 gallons); they think the engines burned 56 gallons per hour (instead of the 38 gph shown in the power profile prepared for Earhart by Lockheed’s Kelly Johnson); and so on.

About a quarter of the book is taken up by the authors’ exposition of their theory about the cause of Earhart’s March 20, 1937 groundloop in Hawaii. They are quite certain that a failure of the right-hand propeller to go

into low pitch/high RPM for takeoff resulted in asymmetrical thrust which caused the loss of directional control. Proof is offered in photographs taken shortly after the accident which supposedly show the offending propeller in the high pitch/low RPM setting. It's an interesting hypothesis and it is certainly true that problems were experienced with the right-hand prop during the Oakland–Oahu leg of the flight. The trouble is, the pictures don't seem to show what the authors say they show. Maybe we're dense, but we just can't see it. We also have to wonder why, if the starboard prop

was in coarse pitch when take-off power was applied, the first indication of trouble wasn't the sudden appearance of pistons punching through the cowlings?

Little need be said about the authors' accusations that TIGHAR's findings regarding the Earhart disappearance are an outright hoax. Their representation of our work is as inaccurate as the rest of the book. In the end, *Amelia Earhart—Case Closed?* is yet one more example of the kind of research and reasoning which has kept Earhart's fate a mystery for nearly sixty years.



## Amelia Captures the Japanese

This is the newest book about Amelia Earhart. Unfortunately, we can't read it, so we can't review it. Anyway, we've got it. If you would like to have a copy of this book, you can write to the author, Fukiko Aoki Hamill, 95 Horatio Street, Apt. 602, New York, NY 10014. If any of our members who read Japanese would like to review this book for *TIGHAR Tracks*, we can arrange for a review copy to be sent to you.

