

Finding Amelia

Next year, 1997, will mark the 60th anniversary of the disappearance of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan during their 1937 World Flight attempt. We think that sixty years is long enough to wait for the answer to one of the 20th century's greatest riddles.

The idea, born during World War Two, that Amelia Earhart may have been a spy or was somehow abducted by the Japanese has always been absurd, but decades of sensational speculation have given that fantasy a place in American folklore. More common today is an acceptance of the ultimate 1937 finding that the flight simply got lost, ran out of gas, crashed at sea and sank into oblivion. Although attractive in its simplicity, the documented circumstances of the disappearance and the subsequent search show it to be, perhaps, too simple.

There is another answer. It is not a new answer. In fact, it is the oldest answer, the one considered to be the most reasonable by those most knowledgeable at the time of the disappearance. Naval and aviation experts agreed that Earhart had, most probably, landed at an island which lay on the navigational line she had said she was following. That line of investigation was abandoned on the basis of a brief aerial search one week later. TIGHAR has done nothing more than pick up the old and now very cold trail where the U.S. Navy left off in 1937.

This special issue of *TIGHAR Tracks* summarizes the results of eight years of TIGHAR research. It is our statement of the case for a conclusive search of Nikumaroro, formerly known as Gardner Island, an uninhabited atoll in the Phoenix Group of islands in the Central Pacific nation of Kiribati.

