

TIGHAR TRACKS



October 2000

Niku III Funding Well Underway

On Monday, October 9, the TIGHAR Executive Committee (Ric and Pat) spent the day in Washington, D.C. successfully negotiating a media rights agreement which secures the basic funding for the Niku III expedition.

There is still plenty of money left to raise to do all we'd like to do; but the agreement provides sufficient funding to cover the ship charter, airfare, and operating expenses for the preparation and execution of the expedition.

Just what kind of media coverage will result has not been determined and, as with all exclusive media agreements, we have given up some degree of control over how our story is told to the public. TIGHAR has relinquished no control over the way we conduct the investigation or the expedition or how we service the TIGHAR membership—we

are free to keep the membership informed of our progress, and involve you all in our research.

Never before have we had this much of a head start on funding an expedition. With a goal of \$500,000 for the three year period (2000 through 2002 inclusive) we are 73% of the way there only six months into the fund drive. If you'd like to help with the other 27%, please fill in the donation slip enclosed with this newsletter. We'll have a Niku III T-shirt and some other things available soon. If you'd like to donate on line, just go to our website, www.tighar.org, and click through to the Earhart Project; it's simple and secure. You can keep track of our progress there, and also keep up with the latest research and planning.

“This is Amelia Earhart...”

TIGHAR has just received what appears to be a real-time transcription of what were believed at the time to be post-loss radio transmissions from Amelia Earhart. We have made no judgement at this time about the possible authenticity of the transmissions, but are working with the text to fully analyze the content, the context, and the physical materials in an effort to verify or dismiss this most interesting development.

A 15 year old girl, “Betty,” was living in St. Petersburg, Florida in the summer of 1937. One afternoon in July—the exact date is not known—at about 4:30 p.m. Betty was sitting on the floor in front of her family's radio console. She liked to listen to music and kept a notebook in which she jotted the words to her favorite songs, made notes of current movies and drew pencil sketches of glamorous people. She also liked to listen to the short wave. Her father had erected

a long wire antenna, perhaps 60 feet in length, across the back yard from the house to a pole near the street. Betty could routinely pick up stations all over the world.

This particular afternoon she was cruising across the dial in search of anything interesting when she came upon a woman's voice, speaking in English and obviously quite upset. Betty listened for a while and was startled to hear the woman say, "This is Amelia Earhart. This is Amelia Earhart."

Betty was always "crazy about airplanes" and was well aware of Earhart's World Flight. Today, at 78, she can't recall whether or not on this particular day she already knew that Earhart was missing but it was clear to her that Amelia was in trouble so Betty opened her notebook and started to make notes about what she was hearing. The words came too fast for her to get everything and often she would only write a word or two of what had been said. The signal faded in and out, sometimes stopped altogether for several minutes and at other times was quite distorted, but Betty tried her best to get down at least some of what was being said. If she wasn't sure about a word she would just write down what it sounded like to her.

Betty heard not only Amelia's calls for help but also her comments to a man who was with her. Betty had the impression that the man had sustained a head injury and was delirious. She gathered that they had crashed on land but that

there was also great concern about rising water. The man would alternately struggle with Amelia and try to get the microphone away from her or panic and try to get out of the airplane.

The transmissions continued to come in, off and on, for an hour and three quarters until 6:15 p.m. At 5:15 her father came home from work and Betty excitedly told him to come listen. After a few minutes her father ran next door to see if his neighbor could also hear it on his radio, but perhaps because his neighbor did not have a long antenna, nothing was heard on the neighbor's set. Later that evening Betty's father reported the event to the local Coast Guard station but he was told that the government had ships in the area and everything was under control.

Betty kept her notebook and, over the years, occasionally tried to get someone to pay attention to her claims of having heard Amelia Earhart. A letter to Fred Goerner brought only a "not interested" response. She had given up thinking that anyone would ever believe her but a friend who had seen TIGHAR's website sent us a very tentative message on her behalf. We were immediately struck by the prospect of an alleged contemporaneous document containing a real-time transcription of what had been heard. Betty has now donated the original notebook to TIGHAR.

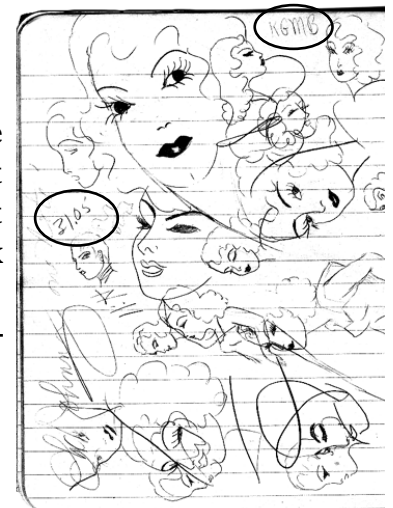
The Notebook

The notebook originally had 96 pages but some in the front were torn out. The first indication of something interesting among the song lyrics and drawings comes on page 44: notations of "31.05" and "KGMB." Betty explained to us that during the intervals when the transmissions from Earhart stopped she would turn to drawings that she wanted to change or work on some more while waiting to see if Amelia would come back on. When she heard another transmis-

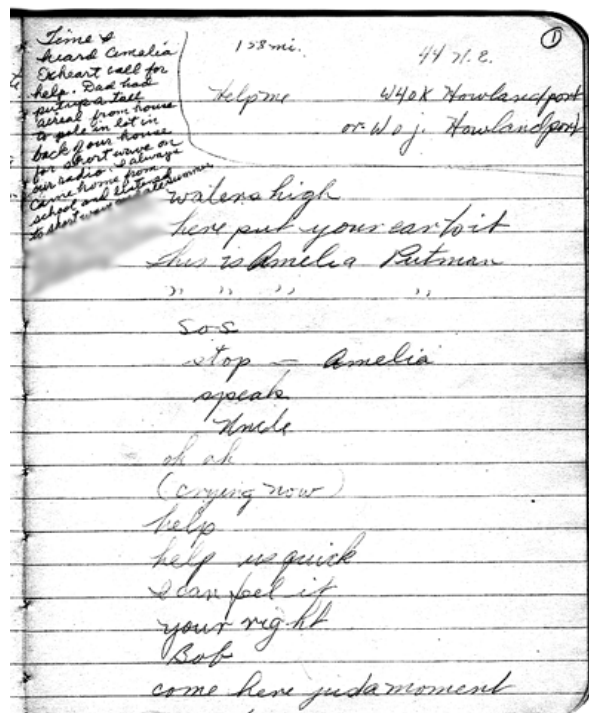
sion she would write down something that might be important before turning back to her notes.

The first transcrip-

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tions show up on page 49. Each notebook page below is accompanied by a copy of the notations, and some clarifications on the notes by Betty, done at our request.



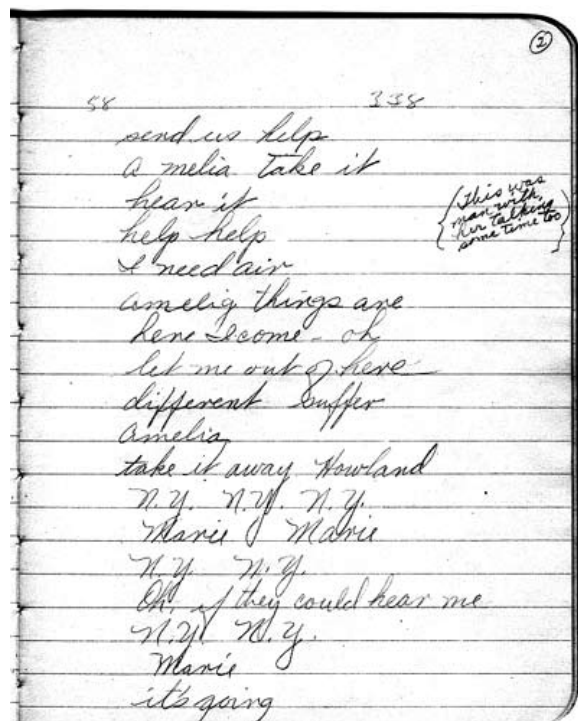
- Line 1 158 mi. 44 N.E.
- Line 2 Help me W40K Howland port or WOJ Howland port
- Line 3 waters high
- Line 4 here put your ear to it
- Line 5 This is Amelia Putman
- Line 6 " " " "
- Line 7 SOS
- Line 8 stop - Amelia
- Line 9 speak
- Line 10 Uncle
- Line 11 Oh oh
- Line 12 (crying now)
- Line 13 help
- Line 14 help us quick
- Line 15 I can feel it
- Line 16 your right
- Line 17 Bob
- Line 18 come here just a moment

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Time I heard Amelia Earhart call for help. Dad had put up a tall aerial from house to pole in lot in back of our house for short wave on our radio. I always came home from school and listened to short wave and all summer.

- Line 1 **Amelia said this but she said several things before this I was so floored at hearing "this is Amelia Earhart" several times I didn't start writing right away until the numbers started being said.**
- Line 2 **AE [speaking]**
- Line 4 **talking to him**
- Line 6 **here she also may have put Earhart**
- Line 8 **here he took over**
- Line 12 **AE - but back on the radio**
- Line 18 **in here he kept wanting to get out of the plane because it was so hot and she kept calling him back.**

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- Line 1 58 338 AE
- Line 2 send us help AE
- Line 3 Amelia take it Man
- Line 4 hear it
- Line 5 help help
- Line 6 I need air
- Line 7 Amelia things are
- Line 8 here I come - oh **in here he complained of his head**
- Line 9 let me out of here
- Line 10 different suffer
- Line 11 Amelia
- Line 12 take it away Howland **in here they were both on radio**
- Line 13 N.Y. N.Y. N.Y.
- Line 14 Marie Marie
- Line 15 N.Y. N.Y.
- Line 16 Oh, if they could hear me
- Line 17 N.Y. N.Y.
- Line 18 Marie AE
- Line 19 It's going

This was man with her talking some time too.

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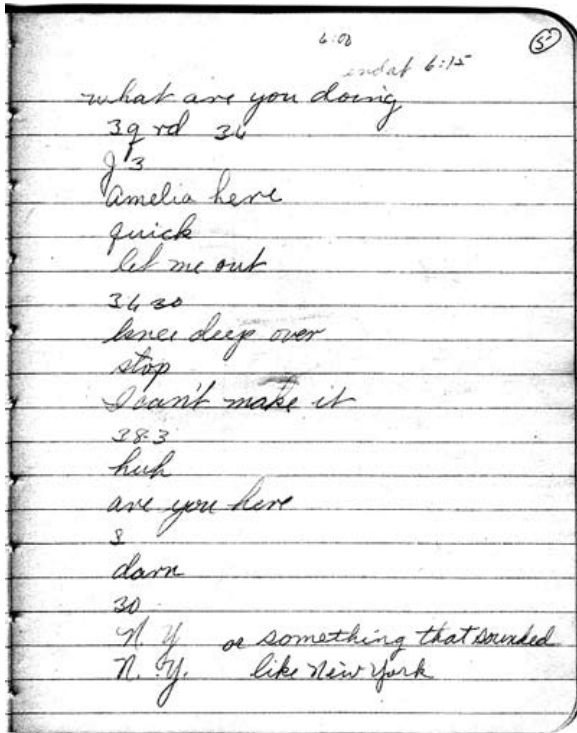
since 4:30 5:10 ③
 airport
 Marie
 oh
 where are you
 waters knee deep -- let me out
 where are you going
 we can't bail out
 see
 yes
 amelia - yes
 oh oh ouch
 are you so scared
 what
 Hello Bud {5:30
 Amelia {1:50
 South 391065 Z or E
 fig 8 - 3.30 500 Z
 3E MJ3B
 a 38 8:13 8983638

Line 1 since 4:30 5:10
 Line 2 airport
 Line 3 Marie
 Line 4 oh
 Line 5 where are you **AE and man-in here he was yelling**
 Line 6 waters knee deep --let me out
 Line 7 where are you going
 Line 8 we can't bail out **in here she was saying the waters coming up like she could see water rising**
 Line 9 see
 Line 10 yes **both talking**
 Line 11 Amelia - yes
 Line 12 oh oh ouch
 Line 13 are you so scared
 Line 14 what
 Line 15 Hello Bud **here she started the "this is Amelia Earhart" and went on**
 Line 16 Amelia
 Line 17 South 391065 Z or E **all AE**
 Line 18 fig 8 - 3.30 500 Z
 Line 19 3E MJ3B
 Line 20 Z 38 Z 13 8983638

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5:30 1 hr. ④
 hurry
 3:15
 are you there-fuzzy
 hear from me hear from me
 George
 get the suitcase in my closet
 Calif.
 are you
 Marie Hey!
 Marie
 Amelia Earhart
 Hey
 watch that battery
 what did you tell me to do
 SOS
 Will you help me
 Will you please
 all right!

Line 1 5:30 1 hr. **I wrote this at top of page**
 Line 2 hurry
 Line 3 3.15
 Line 4 are you there -- fuzzy **"fuzzy" was the radio fading**
 Line 5 hear from me hear from me **AE**
 Line 6 George
 Line 7 get the suitcase in my closet
 Line 8 Calif. **all AE down to here [Calf = California]**
 Line 9 are you
 Line 10 Marie Hey! **Man**
 Line 11 Marie **Man**
 Line 12 Amelia Earhart **he got the radio again**
 Line 13 Hey
 Line 14 watch that battery
 Line 15 what did you tell me to do
 Line 16 SOS
 Line 17 Will you help me
 Line 18 Will you please
 Line 19 all right! **All above was AE**



Line 1 6:00
 Line 2 ended at 6:15
 Line 3 what are you doing **AE**
 Line 4 3Q rd 36
 Line 5 J 3
 Line 6 Amelia here
 Line 7 quick **Man**
 Line 8 let me out **AE**
 Line 9 3630 **AE**
 Line 10 knee deep over
 Line 11 stop **He was yelling again.**
 Line 12 I can't make it
 Line 13 38-3
 Line 14 huh **He had got out and she was getting ready to go too.**
 Line 15 are you here
 Line 16 3
 Line 17 darn **All above AE. She said a few cuss words and sounds like she was having trouble getting water so high the plane was slipping.**
 Line 18 30 **AE**
 Line 19 N.Y. or something that sounded
 Line 20 N.Y. like New York **AE. That was the last I could hear.**

This article was originally submitted to the online Earhart Forum as a way of addressing some of the issues in assessing Betty's Notebook. It is a fine example of the kind of research and analysis we are able to bring to bear on each new piece of evidence in the Earhart Project.

Organizing the Argument

by John Pratt, TIGHAR # 2373

As I see the process of assessing Betty's notebook, it looks something like this:

- Seek anachronisms in the related pages
- Reconstruct transmission
- Assess content

Therefore I want to look ahead to the issue of content assessment. What follows is an attempt to clarify the assessment process by getting criteria and definitions "on the table." It is unlikely that everyone can agree on criteria, or agree on the relative importance of specific criteria. However, if a discussion begins without some framework confusion seems likely.

Already some postings have identified possible "categories" to characterize the notebook contents, and I think I saw:

**Authentic
 Hoax
 Drama
 Fabrication**

**From AE and FN
 Transmitted hoax by noncommercial radio
 Radio play, transmitted by commercial radio station
 Entire incident made up by Betty**

A fabrication is early discounted but included for completeness.

The following matrix is created to identify some of those characteristics and compare the categories based on those characteristics. Note that in some categories a characteristic may have a broad range of values, therefore it may not be a particularly good determinant of that category. Poorly-characterized categories may

also be indicators of poorly defined categories, which require division into finer and more descriptive categories. Of course, the "Authentic" category will have more variability in its characteristics than the "Drama" category. On the other hand this type of analysis may identify some characteristics as critical indicators.

(This is an updated version of John's original suggestion.)

What Betty Heard	Authentic	Hoax	Drama	Fabrication
Heard in St. Pete	(pending)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Duration 1 hr. 45 min.	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
No music	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
No commercials	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
No story line	Yes	No	No	No
Sporadic reception	Yes	Yes (Possible)	Yes (Possible)	Yes
Variable clarity	Yes	Yes (Possible)	Yes (Possible)	Yes
Multiple voices	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Action and emotion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attempted statement of location	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Specific situation details	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Specific situation details correct for Lockheed 10	Yes	No	No	No
"Occult" situation details	Yes	No	No	No
Specific personal details	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Little known correct personal details	Yes	No	No	No
"Occult" personal details	Yes	No	No	No
		5 No	9 No	5 No

"Occult" does not refer to magic; it is only a compact notation for information that does not appear to make sense.

I expect that everyone who reads that matrix will disagree with one or more of my characterization-values. That is part of the beauty of this formalism because the discussion can then find a focus. If we can't get something like consensus of what these categories will be like, it is unlikely that we can share conclusions that result. This type of discussion has already started, with the discussion that some sort of location should have been available for broadcast and therefore real transmissions should have that characteristic.

Another advantage is that it lets us identify the logic we are intuitively using. For example, one might say that the apparent lack of a coherent story line is an indication that this is an Authentic transmission because the alternatives are likely to have a story line.

Also, intuitively, almost everyone seems keen to spot the "occult" details that would strongly indicate authenticity because few outside the participants would know them.

Finally, it may show places where categories are "degenerate," not distinguished. For exam-

ple, this set of characteristics does not seem to strongly distinguish an Authentic transmission from a Hoax. The solution is to find more definitive characteristics or admit that the cases cannot be distinguished.

In conclusion, I have attempted to organize the logic some of the credibility assessment posted so far. I see two features:

1. Some people have intuitively focused on characteristics that would support a conclu-

sion of Authentic if found. It is probably not wishful thinking. If it finds the pony, they get the first ride.

2. It is not clear from the discussion so far that we can strongly distinguish between a Hoax and an Authentic transmission based on internal content. Of course post-loss hoaxes were recorded so this is not a new problem.

Other Ears

On two other occasions, over the years, TIGHAR has been approached by elderly women who think they heard Amelia Earhart on the short wave in July of 1937. Here's a summary of each story.

In a letter to TIGHAR dated March 21, 1991, Thelma L. of Ontario, Canada wrote:

On the seventh day of July 1937, early morning—before eight A.M. as my husband had to be at work at eight o'clock, I was listening to short-wave radio [on a] DeForest Crosley—cabinet model; while my husband was getting ready for work.

I had the radio on “short wave” as there was a program of Japanese music that I got every morning. As I passed back and forth across the dial near the station [where] I usually got the program, I picked up this voice, loud and clear—the message was “Can you read me? Can you read me? This is Amelia Earhart. This is Amelia Earhart. Please come in.” Then she gave her position. When she gave it a second time I picked up a book and jotted down the numbers, latitude [?]-longitude. She continued: “We have taken in water, my navigator is badly hurt; [repeat] we are in need of medical care and must have help; we can't hold on much longer.”

I rushed upstairs to tell my husband and asked him if I shouldn't get in touch with someone. His reply, “It's nearly a week since she's been missing. What you heard was no doubt a play, some theater group.” “But,” I said, “it was English spoken. I've never heard English spoken on that

station.” I went back downstairs. Silence. I went back and forth over the area. Very faintly heard her voice once and then all was quiet and later only static.

At the time, Mrs. L. was living in St. Stephen, New Brunswick which is just across the river from Calais, Maine (far northeastern Maine). She has since looked for the book in which she wrote down the position but can't find it.



In a letter to TIGHAR postmarked October 11, 1990, Mabel D. of Vermont wrote:

On the first night of Amelia Earhart's disappearance I heard her SOS loud and clear, not on the frequency but on the one President Roosevelt said she might use. Her message stated the plane was down on an uncharted island. Small, uninhabited. The plane was partially on land, part in water.

She gave the latitude and longitude of her location. I listened to her for 30-45 minutes. After waking my family to listen—two sons and my husband (all three now deceased) and I had called our local paper to let them listen to her message also when one member of our family reminded me that our President had asked that no one give out any information if they heard anything, as it might endanger her life.

I heard her message around 2 A.M. daylight saving time from my home in Amarillo, Texas. She stated that her navigator Fred Noonan was seriously injured. Needed help immediately. She

also had some injuries but not as serious as Mr. Noonan.

My family and myself decided not to discuss this with anyone. The government of the USA was supposed to take care of everything, so did not even listen for any later messages from her.

I'm sorry I can no longer remember the latitude and longitude of the island. With that we had no trouble locating on map next day. I had it all written down once but over the years, lots of moves, and a second marriage it has been lost.

Of course, President Roosevelt never made any announcement about Amelia Earhart, but what's

interesting about these stories is that—for all their differences in date, time and location—they seem to describe similar situations: water in the plane, Noonan injured, coordinates sent, urgent call for help—exactly the situation Betty describes. Of course, all of those factors (except for the “Noonan injured” bit) might be considered to be no brainers for any description of Earhart's situation. Still, it is apparent that Betty's experience was hardly unique. What *is* unique in Betty's case is the existence of a transcription.

Progress Report

After roughly two weeks of research we have established that:

- The release dates and popularity of the films, song titles and lyrics in the notebook support the premise that the Earhart notations were made in July 1937.
- The notations do not fit the duration and format of the only known radio dramatizations about the Earhart disappearance (two half-hour “March of Time” broadcasts of fictional conversations between Earhart and the *Itasca* using musical cues to distinguish the characters).
- The question of whether it would be possible for transmissions from the Electra to be heard so many thousands of miles away is being being addressed by TIGHAR's radio

experts. Details of the antenna erected by Betty's father are being pinned down with Betty's help and by measurements taken at the house in St. Petersburg where she lived in 1937.

- So far, none of the “occult” information in the notes has been conclusively deciphered but some intriguing possibilities have been suggested. For example, the repeated “N.Y., N.Y.” may have been heard as “New York City” but may, in fact, have been “Norwich City,” the name of the ship on the reef at Nikumaroro and the island's only identifying feature to someone who did not know where she was.

We'll be visiting with Betty in person next month and will include the results of that interview in the next newsletter.



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