

GUNSMOKE

In the weeks leading up to the expedition there has been a veritable feeding frenzy of media attention focused on TIGHAR, the Space Imaging satellite photo, and the possibility that the Earhart mystery may be about to be solved. That possibility, of course, is just as real as it has been prior to each of TIGHAR's previous five trips to the island. We couldn't do all we have to do to put together one of these expeditions if we didn't believe we have a shot at finding that elusive "smoking gun" that will be accepted as conclusive proof that the lost Earhart/Noonan flight ended at Nikumaroro. But, hope as we might for a dramatic discovery, we also recognize that it is far more likely that nothing of the sort will happen.

Archeology is a plodding science, once described in a memorable Calvin & Hobbes comic strip as "the most mind numbing job on the planet." TIGHAR's discoveries about the disappearance of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan—and there have been many—have not come in the form of Indiana Jones style partings of the bushes but in quiet moments of study and analysis.

"In the moment that the connection is made, in that synaptic spasm when the thought drives through the red fuse, is our keenest pleasure."

—Thomas Harris

We'll consider the expedition to be a success if we are able to gather the information needed to test the hypotheses we have formulated, regardless of whether the results ultimately prove to be positive or negative. We'll feel like we've done a good job if we can do that without hurting anyone. We'll consider ourselves extremely fortunate if we come back from this expedition with a few promising bits and pieces of this and that which, when subjected to further research and testing, move us a few more steps closer to the answer to what really happened out there. But, as always, we'll be hoping for that whiff of gunsmoke.