



The Deep Water Handicap

Updates and Corrections

The multi-million dollar deep sea search for The Plane That Isn't There (in our opinion anyway) is off and running – maybe. As you'll recall from our last exciting episode (see *TIGHAR Tracks*, February 2002), there were no fewer than three separate and independent search efforts hoping to scour the same section of the sea floor north and west of Howland Island this spring. One has dropped out, one is rumored to be presently on-site and searching, and the other one has corrected some misconceptions we had but hasn't said what they're doing now.

Scratch

On February 20, 2002 Michael Kammerer's "In Search of Amelia Earhart LLC" website (www.insearchofamelia.com) was replaced with the following short press release:

In Search of Amelia Earhart, LLC (ISAE) announced today that the scheduled deep-sea search for Amelia Earhart's lost airplane in the vicinity of Howland Island has been postponed pending the outcome of two competing expeditions that are setting sail early next month.

This past weekend ISAE learned with reasonable certainty that Dana Timmer's Howland Island Ltd and Dave Jordan's Nauticos would be searching the same area at the same time.

The competition between three search teams is an unattractive scenario when you consider that overall success of any one team as being moderate at best.

We wish Howland Landing LTD and Nauticos a safe voyage and the best of luck. Future ISAE plans will depend on the outcome of these two expeditions.

Spokesmen for ISAE had earlier put their chances for success at 85% or higher. The next day ISAE filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Albuquerque, New

Mexico against OceanWorkers Discovery Inc. of San Diego alleging that the technology to be used in the search for the Earhart plane is slower and less efficient than advertised. According to the suit, "In sum, relative to OceanWorkers original representations, In Search of Amelia Earhart would have to pay twice as much for a vehicle that will perform, at best, half as well and twice as expensively." A jury trial, at least a \$446,000 refund, and a lien on the ARGUS robot submarine was sought.

Nauticos at Sea?

As we went to press, Nauticos Corporation of Hanover, Maryland (www.nauticos.com) was rumored to be at sea and conducting search operations near Howland Island. No one at Nauticos would confirm or deny that a search is underway but "very interesting" news was promised "soon."

Howland Landing LLC

On March 15, 2002 Dana Timmer, the principle investor in the third search company, Howland Landing LLC, emailed TIGHAR with a number of corrections to our earlier coverage of his involvement in the Earhart search. We, of course, regret any inaccuracies and we asked for his permission to publish his email letter, unedited, on the TIGHAR website and in *TIGHAR Tracks*. He did not choose to grant such permission so we'll try to paraphrase his comments and hope we get it right this time.

Mr. Timmer first wants us to understand that he is not wealthy nor is he a venture capitalist, as we have described him. He did not mention how much he has spent or invested to date but he says that he has put up only a small portion of the money spent in the 1999 search conducted by Williamson & Associates. He says that the 1994 plan to use a Russian vessel as a search platform did not abort because the vessel proved incapable of supporting the search technology but because another investor

withdrew from the project. He did not provide any further details except to say that, contrary to our impression, there was no acrimony between himself and Elgen Long when their joint effort fell apart.

Mr. Timmer took exception to our characterization of his deal with Earhart's heirs as "the purchase of the Electra." He says that, having determined that the airplane had been owned 100 percent by Amelia and that it was uninsured, he obtained a copy of the will, followed the inheritance claim, contacted the executor, and entered into an agreement should the plane be found. This, he says, was done in 1991. His concern was prompted, he says, by the ongoing litigation concerning the treasure ship *Central America*. He alleges that both Nauticos and ISAE have attempted to secure similar agreements. (TIGHAR, of course, has not. It has never been our intention to own anything we find and, unless proven otherwise, we recognize the claim of the Republic of Kiribati to ownership of anything found on Nikumaroro.)

TIGHAR's description of Nauticos' and Elgen Long's distress upon learning in 1999 that Timmer was about to conduct a search was, according to Mr.

Timmer, inaccurate. He says that Long's comment was that "the important thing is that the plane be found." However, we did not make up the bit about Nauticos contemplating a lawsuit and Mr. Timmer has not denied it.

Refuting TIGHAR's claim that Kammerer, Nauticos and Howland landing are all working from the same numbers, Mr. Timmer says that he is using data compiled independently by Roy Nesbitt and Ernest Schofield who are retired RAF pilot/navigators. (Roy Nesbit is a well-respected British aviation historian whose two-part article "What Did Happen to Amelia Earhart?" appeared in the January and February 1989 issues of *Aeroplane Monthly* magazine.) Mr. Timmer says that he also has his own theory, but all put the airplane on the bottom near Howland.

We're grateful to Mr. Timmer for correcting these errors. He did not say anything about another Howland Landing search being imminent but we'll continue to pass along whatever information we can get about these other efforts to find to solve the Earhart mystery.

