

TIGHAR TRACKS

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NEW!

Niku Vp Expedition

IMPROVED!

Different boat, new dates, some new team members, more time at the island – this year's expedition has evolved since the last issue of *TIGHAR Tracks*. When the time came to make firm reservations, some of the non-TIGHAR passengers for the planned Phoenix Rising Expedition backed out and our friends at *Nai'a Cruises* in Fiji had to cancel the trip for this year. Fortunately we had a Plan B ready to go, courtesy of our coral reef geologist Howard Allred in New Zealand. Rather than piggy-backing on the *Nai'a* diving tour of the Phoenix Islands, the Niku Vp Expedition will now be a stand-alone operation using the brand new 56 foot S/V (sailing vessel) *Mollie*.

Owned by veteran Pacific captain Ken Durey and crewed by Ken, his wife Louise and their young daughter Mollie, the boat sailed from its home port of Auckland, New Zealand on April 30th and is now making its way northeastward via various island groups to rendezvous with the TIGHAR team in Pago Pago, American Samoa. On July 3rd the Niku Vp expedition will begin the four-day, 600 mile voyage to Nikumaroro where the team will spend a week (rather than the 2 or 3 days previously planned) carrying out a number of tasks in preparation for next year's major effort.



The Niku Vp Team



The Niku Vp team will be led by **Col Van T. Hunn, USAF (Ret.)**–TIGHAR #1459EC. Van has extensive experience as a sport SCUBA diver with specialized training in underwater search operations and has been the Dive Team leader on three previous TIGHAR expeditions to Nikumaroro.

He has also been active in Earhart Project archival research and, most recently, has been instrumental in finding technical documents pertaining to the Electra component which seems to match the description of an object seen by a marine biologist last year at Nikumaroro.



Richard W. "Walt" Holm, TIGHAR #0980EC, is an electrical engineer currently engaged in defense-related research. Walt was a member of our Dive Team on the Niku III Expedition in 2001.



Howard Alldred, TIGHAR #2489, is a trained coral atoll geologist and diver who came forward to volunteer his services during the our daily internet coverage of the 2001 Niku III expedition. Since then Howard has traveled from his home in New Zealand to the U.S. to

participate in last year's Earhart Project Advisory Council (EPAC) conference and has become a valued member of the TIGHAR research team. His on-site observations at Nikumaroro should

give us new insights into how the islands works and help us target specific areas for searching.



Tom Roberts, TIGHAR #1956EC, is a Lockheed-Martin engineer at the legendary "Skunk Works." He earned his TIGHAR expedition certification at the Loon Lake, Idaho B-23 survey in 2000. This will be his first trip to Nikumaroro.

Expedition Coverage

When *Mollie* arrives at Nikumaroro on July 7th we'll put up on the TIGHAR website, and send out as a special edition newsletter, a research bulletin fully describing what we know and what we suspect about the object the team will be investigating at Nikumaroro.

The team will have a satellite phone with them and will be in daily communication with TIGHAR's office here in Wilmington, Delaware. Just as we did during the 2001 Niku III expedition, we'll post reports on the TIGHAR website every day during the week they are at the island.

Expedition Funding

Selling exclusive media rights to this trip is not an option, both because there is no more room on the boat and because, although he is not supporting this trip, Mr. Kammerer still owns the "commercial exploitation" rights to Earhart Project expedition work until the contract expires in December of this year.

However, through the generous support of the TIGHAR membership, including significant contributions by the team members themselves, the money needed to cover the basic costs of the expedition – the boat, provisioning, airfare – amounting to about \$28,000, is either in hand or pledged. But the direct costs of an expedi-

tion are always just the tip of the iceberg. Less obvious and harder to raise, but just as vital, is the money it takes to run the organization, provide the logistical support, and keep the membership informed. For example, in 2001, our near real-time internet coverage of the Niku III expedition put our daily website “hits” through the roof, generating several thousand dollars of special hosting costs. We still need to raise at least another \$47,000 to cover TIGHAR operating expenses to support this year’s two expeditions, **Fiji Bone Search II** and **Niku Vp**.

Your contributions are the fuel that keeps TIGHAR going and growing and bringing home answers. Please use the enclosed card to send your donation today, or contribute directly through our secure website at:

<http://www.tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/fuel donate.html>

