

Fiji Bone Search II

A Jesuit priest from Buffalo and a retired Los Angeles county cop travel to exotic Suva in the Fiji Islands to search for the bones of Amelia Earhart. Next season's hottest prime-time TV series? No – just TIGHAR's current research expedition in our continuing effort to locate the bones and artifacts of a castaway found on Nikumaroro in 1940 and sent to British colonial headquarters in Fiji where they subsequently disappeared.

The partial skeleton is last known to have been stored at the Colony of Fiji's Central Medical School in 1941 "pending further developments," but the only further developments were the outbreak of the Pacific war, location changes for the school, and the eventual the emergence of Fiji as an independent nation. Somewhere along the way the bones were misplaced, lost track of, or somehow disposed of. If they still exist, and if they can be found, it should be possible to determine conclusively whether or not

they are the remains of Amelia Earhart. The various artifacts found with the bones (the sextant box, the shoe parts, etc.) are last known to have been in the custody of senior British colonial administrators in the months preceding the war. Their re-discovery would be less conclusive but nonetheless important in determining the identity of the castaway of Gardner Island

In 1999, TIGHAR's senior archaeologist Dr. Tom King, our forensic osteologist Dr. Karin Burns, and TIGHAR researchers Kristin Tague and Barbara Norris spent several weeks in Fiji interviewing contacts, checking records, examining bone collections and searching possible storage sites. They made a good start to the investigation, eliminating some possibilities, and identifying several leads that need further follow-up before they ran out of time and money. Since then, background research has continued by phone, mail, and email in preparation for the next on-the-ground round of inquiry.

Thanks to the generous support of the TIGHAR membership we were able to launch that next phase in the investigation with the departure on May 15, 2003 of Martin X. Moleski, Ph.D., SJ (TIGHAR #2359) and Roger B. Kelley (TIGHAR #2112CE) for a month of on-site searching and researching in Fiji. Marty is a Jesuit priest with a Ph.D. in systematic theology, a field which deals with standards of proof, evidence, and credibility. In Roger's long career in law enforcement he dealt with the same issues from a rather different perspective. Together they should make a formidable investigative team.

We wish them Good Luck and Good Hunting. We'll have a report on their findings in an upcoming *TIGHAR Tracks*.

