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Weston, A.C.T. 2611,
Australia,
1 March, 1992.

Dr Thomas F. King,
410 Windsor Street,
Silver Spring,
MD 20910-4242, U.S.A.

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TIGHAR

Dear Dr King,

Yes, Eric Bevington was with me on the first Phoenix Islands Settlement Scheme expedition in 1937 as my assistant but then went on to other administrative work in the Gilberts and Colony headquarters on Banaba, and Gallagher took his place and eventually succeeded me in charge of what was known as PISS, the Officer in Charge being known as OIC, Piss, much to everyone's amusement.

'Erb', as he was called, wrote the book you mentioned some years ago and had it published privately in 1990. One can buy a copy by writing to him at Holmans Cottage, Burley, Hants BH24,4AZ, the published price being £5.10.0, which is very reasonable I think. But unless you send him enough to cover the airmail postage he may send it by seamount which could result in it not reaching you for weeks. The book will give you in detail an accurate account of what Erb did on Nikumaroro.

Gillespie, in one of his TIGHAR reports, mentions that he is in possession of Erb's Diary but that I know nothing of. Maybe you could ask Erb whether he has given it to him. In any case I doubt it containing much more information than is in the book.

I was glad to hear that Mrs Groves has settled down happily in Virginia. I should like to publish her excellent long poem on the traditional history of the I-Kiribati in the series of works on the Gilbertese of which I enclose a copy. The trouble was that I did not know her address and the fact that she has not written it in the official orthography; and I have not got the skill, time or permission to transcribe it.

I'm working on Item 6 on my list right now but alas my great friend and colleague died of cancer a fortnight ago, having finished the translation of the traditional material on which it is based. But I expect that the next publication will actually be a new entry, Kambati Uriam's superb thesis on "The Nature, Function, and History of Oral Tradition in Gilbertese Society", which he finished last week in the post-graduate school of the Australian National University. As I rather feared, I am his external examiner, for I am too old by at least 15 years for such drudgery - normally they never ask anyone over 70.

I'm glad that your novel goes ahead and wish you all success: we have far too few novels on the central equatorial atolls, though I fancy that Melville's Mardi was based on the Gilberts (several old timers in the islands consider it to be his best book).

Like you I have absolutely no interest in where Amelia Earhart was buried or not buried. I just answer as factually as I can all the queries which Gillespie, Goerner, and others, put to me. Its all a frantic waste of time for at 85 it takes ages to draft answers when one's memory is inevitably fickle about details of one's life half a century ago which were quite unimportant even at the time and which one has never given a thought to since

I often wish that Gillespie could find Amelia and her colleague on Nikumaroro because I believe that it would make him happy, and as far as I am concerned I would merely hope that she died a quick and not a lingering death; where it happened does not seem to me of the slightest importance.

With all good wishes, and may your novel be a best-seller,

Yours,

Harry M. Ande