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Sir Ian Thomson
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Dear Sir Ian:

Thank you very much for your letter of 22 May. I have written to Patricia Garvey, and will hope for her response.

It truly is a sad situation in Fiji. I've now heard a claim that the coup is really a front for businesses in the U.S. and Australia that are trying to acquire title to indigenous Fijian land -- sadly consistent with recent practice, I'm afraid. I hear pretty regularly from the archaeologist at the Fiji Museum, who says the Indo-Fijian members of the staff are afraid even to come to work. Needless to say, living where I do I'm all too aware of how intractable interracial politics can be, especially when there are outside interests stirring the pot. I can only shake my head and commiserate with my Fijian friends.

Your comments on Vaskess and Isaac/Verrier gave more substance to what we've heard from Eric Bevington and others, and seen in the WPHC files. I wasn't aware of the latter's connections with Ratu Mara; that's very interesting. Since the (now ex-, I suppose) President was a student of Hoodless', we'd hoped to speak with him when we were in Suva last year, but despite encouragement from some of his colleagues he was never available. Since our visit we've heard rumors that there was some unhappiness in Fiji with our mission, and it's been suggested that some of this unhappiness may have sprung from quotes we gave the media about Isaac/Verrier's role in the passage of the bones from Nikumaroro to Fiji. I have to wonder whether we unknowingly made an enemy of the President by seeming to insult the memory of his friend. The same rumors also claim that the bones were being held by an individual in Suva as recently as the 1960s, but as yet all we have about this are rumors.

I appreciate the information on the evacuation of Ocean Island, too. I was reading about it just the other day in one of Sir Harry's books, but he doesn't provide much detail, and an account of the pre-evacuation bombings, given by Garvey himself in a book by June Knox-Mawer of the BBC, treats it almost as a lark. We who've never had to face the kinds of dangers and challenges you and your colleagues did in those grim days can only stand in awe of the courage and fortitude with which you all did your duty and more.

We are trying to locate Peri-Johnston, but thus far with no success. Our contacts in New Zealand are not particularly good, but we've gotten as far as finding that he is not listed (indeed, NO Peri-Johnston is listed) in readily available telephone books and on-line resources. A colleague in Australia is now trying to work through some medical contacts, and another is getting in touch with Dr. Hoodless' daughter, who lives in New Zealand, to see if she has any thoughts about where Peri-Johnston might be.

I hope you won't mind my asking if you have any ideas about the whereabouts of still another of your WPHC colleagues -- Dr. Duncan Ewing Campbell ("Jock") Macpherson. Dr. Macpherson was deeply involved in the whole saga of the Nikumaroro bones, and was with Gallagher when he died. He has no information on what happened to him during the War, or whether he is still alive or may have left papers.

And while I'm asking, I wonder if the name Capt. Stan Brown rings any bells with you. Capt. Brown (then ship's engineer, I believe) was aboard *Viti* at the time of Gallagher's demise, and his name has been associated with the bones in some media accounts. He lives in Fiji, but when we tried to contact him last year his wife turned us away.

Finally, I thought I would enclose a couple of chapters from a book I'm writing with a couple of colleagues about the Earhart quest, which I thought you might find interesting. Any comments or corrections you may have will be much appreciated.

Thank you as always for your interest and help.

Sincerely,