

30 April 2007.

Dear Thomas,

Thanks for your letter of 17 April. I greatly admire the continuing determination that you and your TIGHAR team possess in your on-going efforts to solve the mystery surrounding the actual whereabouts of Amelia Earhart's crash site in 1937. I wish all of you well in your forthcoming efforts, when you re-visit NIKOMARORO in July this year.

I wish too that I could be of more help to you. Unlike Sir Harry Luke I did not keep a diary. I often wondered in those far off days, when I was his ADC, how he managed to have the energy and will-power to set down in writing nightly his thoughts and opinions on the day's events.

I knew Stan Brown well. He was a first class Fellow, who stayed on in Fiji after independence. So far as I know, his wife, Jean, who was for many years the Private Secretary at Government House, Suva, is still alive. I do not have her address, but your Suva contacts should be able to contact her.

From my own records I know that Stan was some six years older than me - I am 87. His first appointment in the Fiji Civil Service was in 1940 - July, when he was appointed "Temporary Third Engineer, R.C.S. (Royal Colonial Ship) Viti". I have no record of his service in the Gilbert & Ellice Islands Colony, but I can confirm that the R.C.S. NIMANOA and R.C.S. KIARUA were in service in those years.

The ADC mentioned by Eric Bennington was not me. He was Captain Jocelyn Nicholls, who sadly was killed in action in Burma during WWII.

As regards the reception we received on arrival ashore in the Phoenix Islands in November/December 1941, there was no pageantry either on our part or that of the islanders. It took the "Viki" 6 days to journey from Suva to the Phoenix Group. Gardner (Nikomaroro) was to have been our first call, but strong "westerlies" made landing impossible on 25 November, and we made for Canton Is. We did make it to Gardner on the 30th, the 'westerlies' having abated. There was, of course, no transport and we walked everywhere. The "Sir Harry Luke Avenue" extended for about a mile and we covered that stretch. We stopped, of course, at Gerald G.'s grave. Dr. Macpherson was with us. He had designed the memorial, and the house used by G.G. was of a type found in the Gilberts. There was an air of confidence amongst the Gilbertese who had settled on Gardner, and while they mourned the loss of G.G. they had no worries about their ability to survive.

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I am glad that you now have a copy of "Fortress Fiji", and if you turn to p.39 therein you will find some information about the tunnels that were made as air raid shelters. Frankly, I would have preferred to take a chance in the open rather than lodge in one of those tunnels, as the entrance was also the exit! After WWII the tunnels were blocked up and so far as I know are still that way. It is highly unlikely that the bones brought to Suva by Gerald G. were ever stored in one of the tunnels.

I enjoyed Fr. Molesti's story about his meeting with Ron Gatty. What a colourful character Fleming was! He ended his days working as the caretaker of Nukunau Is. near Suva. Presently it has been used as a prison, in which Speight is incarcerated. He was the coup leader in 2000.

Yr. fan,