

# **Final Report on Oral History Interviews**

**Solomon Islands, August 2011**

**Gary F. Quigg, M.A.**

**The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery  
(TIGHAR)**

**November 30, 2014**



*Nikumaroro Village, Vaghena Island*

## Final Report on Oral History Interviews, Solomon Islands 2011

From August 20-30, 2011, John Clauss, Nancy Farrell, Karl Kern, Baoro Laxton Koraua and Gary F. Quigg, of The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR) conducted a research expedition in the Solomon Islands recording oral history interviews with former residents of Nikumaroro Island (Kiribati) and examining relevant archival materials in the Solomon Islands National Archives. This final report provides an overview of the expedition, an analysis of information obtained, and edited transcripts of each interview conducted as a part of further testing of the Earhart Project's Nikumaroro Hypothesis. All material and images herein are the property of TIGHAR.<sup>1</sup>

### Procedural Overview

Upon arrival in Honiara (Guadalcanal), Clauss, Farrell, Kern and Quigg were met by Koraua at the airport. Mr. Koraua is a resident of Honiara and the son of Paul Laxton. Mr. Laxton, who served as Assistant Lands Commissioner for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, was the British Colonial Service officer in charge of the settlement on Gardner Island (Nikumaroro Island) for several years following World War II. Born on Nikumaroro Island in 1960, Mr. Koraua was relocated to the Solomon Islands, along with most of the population of the Nikumaroro, when the colony was abandoned in 1963. Mr. Koraua was crucial to the success of the expedition, acting as interpreter, logistics coordinator, ambassador and gracious host. Further, Mr. Koraua provided for our transportation between the outer islands of Kohinggo and Vaghena aboard his boat, the M/V *Temaury*.<sup>2</sup>

The team spent the first three days of the expedition in Honiara gathering provisions for the upcoming voyage on *Temaury*, testing audio and video recording equipment, and conducting archival research in the Solomon Islands National Archives. Despite a full day and one half day reviewing hundreds of documents of the Western Pacific High Commission, no pertinent information on Nikumaroro or other subjects related to the Earhart Project was found in the archives.

On Tuesday, August 23, the team flew from Honiara (Guadalcanal) to Munda (New Georgia) via Solomon Airlines to begin field research. Arriving in the afternoon, a local truck driver provided transit along the coast road to the harbor at Noro where *Temaury* was docked. Once the team was aboard, *Temaury* motored across the narrow harbor to Rawaki Village (Kohinggo).



*Rawaki Village, Kohinggo Island*

---

1 TIGHAR's work was primarily self-funded by participating team members. Gardner Island is the historic name for today's Nikumaroro. For clarity, this report refers to this island as Nikumaroro throughout. The Nikumaroro Hypothesis of TIGHAR's Earhart Project posits that Amelia Earhart and her navigator Fred Noonan landed on Nikumaroro on July 2, 1937 and survived for an undetermined period of time before dying there. See "The Earhart Project" at <http://www.tighar.org/>; Interviews of former Nikumaroro residents were identified as number five on the top ten research priorities of the Earhart Project. See "How We Do It," <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Archivessubject.html> (Accessed November 23, 2014).

2 P.B. Laxton, "Nikumaroro," <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/laxton.html> (Accessed November 13, 2014). Though Nikumaroro was entirely abandoned in 1963, research for this report did not determine whether all of the residents relocated to the Solomons. It is apparent most of the settlers did relocate to the Solomons, but some may have moved elsewhere.

Although sundown was nearing the team elected to go ashore on *Temauri*'s dinghy, introduce ourselves to residents of Rawaki, and meet with our first interview subjects. We were welcomed into the home of Taniana and Ona (Tionae) Bourika who invited us to gather in the family maneaba adjacent to their home. Having settled in the maneaba, the team explained the purpose of the visit by kerosene lamp light. Through Mr. Koraua's interpretation Taniana and Ona graciously agreed to be interviewed the next morning.<sup>3</sup>

Spending the night aboard *Temauri*, anchored just off the village, the team went ashore at 8:30am to conduct the first interviews on Wednesday, August 24. Taniana and Ona had invited Ona's life-long best friend Ritema Tapweaitu to join us, and the team interviewed all three subjects. After six hours conducting interviews the team departed Rawaki, and, aboard *Temauri*, motored back across the harbor to Noro to take on additional fuel for the twelve hour voyage to Nikumaroro Village.



*M/V Temauri*

Enduring rough seas on the overnight crossing from Noro (New Georgia) to Nikumaroro Village (Vaghena) through the New Georgia Sound, the team was eager to arrive ashore Thursday morning, August 25. Mr. Koraua led the team to the community maneaba where we met our interview subjects: Aberaam Abera, Teauama Abera (wife of Aberaam), Boraing Abera (brother of Aberaam), and Matakite Amerike. Our final interview subject in this village, Teinamati Amerike (brother of Matakite), is unable to walk so the team interviewed him in his home after conducting the interviews in the maneaba. Upon completing all interviews, the team went back aboard *Temauri* to spend the night. Motoring three hours to Kagua Island on Friday morning, August 26, the group caught the Solomons Airlines flight back to Honiara.

The team spent the remaining three days in Honiara. During this time the interview recordings were checked, the collection of artifacts on exhibit at the Solomon Islands National Museum was reviewed for any objects that may have found their way from Nikumaroro Island, meetings were held with the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education as well as the United States Consul to the Solomon Islands, and two interviews were conducted with former Nikumaroro Island resident Joseph Nemaia on August 27 and 28 at his home. Having completed all expedition initiatives the team departed Honiara for Los Angeles on Tuesday, August 30.<sup>4</sup>

3 In I-Kiribati culture, a maneaba or meeting house is the largest structure in the village and serves as the focal point for traditional lifeways. An open structure consisting of vertical support poles and a roof of thatched palm fronds or corrugated metal, the maneaba is a gathering place for social, civic, and religious activities. Family dwellings may also include a smaller maneaba adjacent to the home wherein guests are received and family gatherings held. See "Jane's Oceania: Kiribati Culture," <http://www.janeresture.com/ki33/culture.htm> (Accessed November 13, 2014).

4 Kern and Quigg made numerous efforts to gain access to the collections storage area at the Solomon Islands National Museum. Finally, on the morning of the team's departure, August 30, the researchers were allowed into the repository. Within minutes of their arrival, they were asked to leave the area. The reason given for their removal was that a research permit from the Minister of Education was necessary for access to collections storage. Perplexed that this requirement had not been previously mentioned, and unable to obtain the necessary permit prior to departure, Kern and Quigg left the museum grounds without conducting a thorough search for any items in collections storage that may have had origins on Nikumaroro, Kiribati.

## Summary Analysis of Interviews

Individuals interviewed during this expedition were former residents of Nikumaroro Island (formerly Gardner Island) in the Phoenix Islands who were relocated to the Solomon Islands in 1963 when the British colony on Nikumaroro Island was abandoned. All individuals interviewed were selected by Mr. Koraua as being the oldest residents in Rawaki Village and Nikumaroro Village (with the exception of Mr. Nemaia of Honiara). These elders are the only residents of the villages with memories of their time on Nikumaroro Island. Mr. Koraua himself was born on Nikumaroro Island in 1960, emigrated with the former colony residents to the Solomons in 1963, and grew up in Nikumaroro Village on Vaghena Island before moving to Honiara as an adult.

Six interviews, featuring nine individuals, (totaling approximately eight hours) were conducted. Four of the interviews were translated by Mr. Koraua, wherein the TIGHAR team asked questions of the informants in English and Mr. Koraua would then re-state the questions in I-Kiribati. The informants would then respond in I-Kiribati and Mr. Koraua would re-state the answer in English. While the younger generations of village residents speak English, Pidgin and I-Kiribati, the older village residents speak I-Kiribati predominantly and usually have a limited understanding and usage of English. The exceptions to this process were Mr. Teinamati Amerike and Mr. Joseph Nemaia, both of whom were fluent in English and responded accordingly without need for translation.

A digital video camera (with audio) and two audio recorders (one digital, one cassette tape) were used for each interview. Clauss, Kern and Farrell operated the recording equipment. Farrell took copious hand-written notes of each interview. Quigg led the questioning, with all other team members assisting with follow-up queries. With the exceptions of Mr. Teinamati Amerike and Mr. Joseph Nemaia, who were interviewed in their homes, all other informants were interviewed in a maneaba.

Questions were developed to avoid leading the informants. To further guard against potential contamination of information given in answers, the team avoided mentioning the Earhart Project, aircraft, pilots, Amelia Earhart or anything associated with work conducted by TIGHAR. At the conclusion of each interview, photo albums (prepared by TIGHAR Senior Archaeologist Thomas F. King, Ph.D.) featuring historic and present day images of Nikumaroro were provided the respondents in hopes these visuals would prompt additional memories. The following interview summaries provide highlights relevant only to the Earhart Project's Nikumaroro Hypothesis.

### **Mr. Taniana Bourika, age 74, Rawaki Village August 24, 2011**

Taniana came to Nikumaroro Island with his parents in 1945 when he was eight years of age and remained there until the colony was abandoned in 1963. Most interesting among Taniana's memories of Nikumaroro Island, consisting of new anecdotal evidence to TIGHAR, was his recollection of finding shiny metal debris, including what he described as "the door of an airplane" on the beach, and just inland of the beach of an area he called "Nairapu" (spelling unclear) near Bauareke Passage, which the Solomons Team interpreted as the area also known as Tekibeia by the settlers. Other enlightening information from Taniana focused on his activities at what he called the far side of the island. In this area, Taniana described how he and other boys would fish and climb Buka trees to catch Frigate birds, but the boys would normally not cook the birds where they found them. Instead, the boys would take the birds back to the village to be shared. To prepare the birds for a meal, the wings, feet and heads were cut off before being placed on a fire or in an earthen oven. Taniana explained that he and his comrades would hunt turtles on the far side of the island, "We hunted for turtles and birds all along that side... We would build fires and cook turtles. Gallagher had a house there. Normally we would go and sleep in Gallagher's house because he had left." A tank "for Mr. Gallagher" was also there. Everything from the turtle carcass would be used except the bones and shell. Asked about camp fires in that area, Taniana said the boys did not use a single fire pit over and over, but would move the location of their fire. Taniana had only heard vague rumors of bones found on Nikumaroro.<sup>5</sup>

---

5 "Place Names on Nikumaroro," [http://tighar.org/wiki/Place\\_Names\\_on\\_Nikumaroro](http://tighar.org/wiki/Place_Names_on_Nikumaroro) (Accessed November 22, 2014); "Gallagher of Nikumaroro," [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/25\\_GallagherNiku/25\\_GallagherNiku.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/25_GallagherNiku/25_GallagherNiku.html) (Accessed November 22, 2014); "Seven Site Research Report," <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Archivessubject.html> (Accessed November 22, 2014). Gerald Gallagher was Officer-In-Charge of the Phoenix Islands Settlement Scheme (British Colonial Service)



*Ona Bourika, Ritema Tapweaitu and Taniana Bourika,  
August 24, 2011, Rawaki Village*

Taniana’s memories of “the far side” of the island provide an alternative explanation for some of the archaeological evidence found on what TIGHAR refers to as the “Seven Site.” TIGHAR posits that the Seven Site may contain evidence of a castaway camp, perhaps created by Earhart and/or Noonan. During archaeological survey and excavations at the Seven Site in 2001, 2007, and 2010, numerous fire features were observed and investigated, containing the bones of fish, turtles, and birds. Some of those camp fire remains included artifacts that appear to be consistent with objects known to have been associated with Earhart’s Lockheed Electra aircraft (particularly a jackknife of the same design as one listed on a March 1937 inventory of items onboard) or consistent with Earhart’s documented use of particular skin care products such as freckle cream

and rouge. Taniana’s recollections of boyhood hunting trips near Gallagher’s far-side house may explain some of the accumulations of bird, turtle, and fish bones in numerous fire features on the Seven Site, including one deposit of bird bones found comprising (almost exclusively) wing bones. However, these reminiscences do not account for the older camp fire remains discovered by Gallagher in 1940 or the artifacts discovered therein and nearby.<sup>6</sup>

***Ms. Ona (Tione) Bourika and Ms. Ritema Tapweaitu, ages 74/74, Rawaki Village August 24, 2011***

Ona and Ritema were interviewed together, upon their request. The two women have been life-long best friends from the time they were young girls on Nikumaroro Island. Ritema arrived at Nikumaroro in 1945, and Ona arrived in 1952. Both remained on the island until the 1963 relocation. The women shared that they heard about the discovery of the shiny metal and door Taniana and other boys had found on the island, but explained that girls were not allowed to explore the island. They also mentioned they had heard rumors about bones being found on the island, but had never seen any bones.

Ona and Ritema provided much information about lifeways on Nikumaroro from the 1940s until the colony ended in 1963, but nothing related to TIGHAR’s hypothesis. However, they did mention a geographic name previously unknown to TIGHAR, Takapi for, “...the far side of the island, where Gallagher’s holiday house is. The whole coast there, it’s called Takapi, meaning the bottom.”

---

on Nikumaroro from 1940 until his death in 1941. While Gallagher’s primary residence on the island was in the village adjacent to Tatiman Passage, he also had a house on the windward side of the island approximately two and one half miles East/Southeast.

6 “The Seven Site,” [http://tighar.org/wiki/The\\_Seven\\_Site](http://tighar.org/wiki/The_Seven_Site) (Accessed November 13, 2014); “The 70th Anniversary Expedition Reports and Analysis,” Report: Artifact 2-8-S-39 , red wafers, ([http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Expeditions/NikuV/Analysis\\_and\\_Reports/Compact/NikuVanalysiscompact.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Expeditions/NikuV/Analysis_and_Reports/Compact/NikuVanalysiscompact.html)) (Accessed November 22, 2014); “A Freckle In Time or a Fly in the Ointment?” A Freckle in Time, <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/ResearchPapers/freckleintime/FreckleInTime.html> (Accessed November 22, 2014); “Artifact 2-8-S-5,” <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Archivessubject.html> (Accessed November 22, 2014). The Seven Site is named for a natural clearing in the vegetation on the Southeast side of Nikumaroro that appears on historic aerial photographs from 1939 and resembles the numeral 7. In 2007 and 2010, TIGHAR recovered artifacts on the Seven Site of 1930s American manufacture consistent with cosmetic material (possibly rouge), pieces from a ladies compact, and a glass freckle cream jar as well as a broken jackknife of the same design as one inventoried aboard Earhart’s Lockheed Electra in 1937. TIGHAR posits these archaeological remains are remnants of a 1930s castaway camp associated with Earhart and or Noonan, and that other material on site is consistent with Gallagher’s Takapi house. I-Kiribati settlers on the island referred to this area as “the far side” or “Takapi” (the bottom) and the location of Gallagher’s house there as Karaka Point. Karaka (KEH-du-kuh) is the I-Kiribati pronunciation of Gallagher. See the map on page 10.

**Mr. Aberaam Abera and Ms. Teauama Abera, ages 71/68, Nikumaroro Village August 25, 2011**

Husband and wife, Aberaam and Teauama were interviewed together. Both were born on Nikumaroro, Aberaam in 1940 and Teauama in 1943. They remembered people salvaging metal from the shipwreck and the U.S. Coastguard Station, a pair of shoes having been found somewhere on the island, and a house built on the far side of the island for Gallagher that had a tank nearby. The couple recalled they did not see the shoes themselves, but heard many people talking about them. They also mentioned the area where Gallagher's far-side house was located became known as Karaka Point, and that many settlers regularly went there after Gallagher's death. Aberaam provided details on how turtles, birds and clams were harvested and prepared, and on fishing methods. Teauama remembered her father having a large piece of aluminum. When she was later shown a photograph of artifact 2-2-V-1 (see photo on page 16), Teauama said her father's piece of aluminum resembled the one in the photograph. Teauama explained that this kind of aluminum sheet was used to gather scrapings from coconuts, saying, "Everyone did..." and that it was called a "tengabingabi." Teauama did not know where her father got the aluminum, but thought perhaps from Manra or Nikumaroro. Both respondents remember human bones being found in the village during excavations for structures. Aberaam and Teauama



*Interview with Aberaam and Teauama Abera, August 25, 2011, Nikumaroro Village*

presumed these remains were from previous settlements on the island. They were unaware of human bones being found anywhere else on Nikumaroro.<sup>7</sup>

The Abera's reminiscences corroborate archaeological data from Nikumaroro, and, like those of Taniana Bourike, support a non-castaway explanation for some of the features recorded on the Seven Site. Archaeological fieldwork conducted by TIGHAR on Nikumaroro produced a number of artifacts found on the abandoned village site that originated from the Norwich City shipwreck of 1929 (located on the reef less than a mile from the village) and from the U.S. Coast Guard Loran Radio Station

active from 1944-1946 (located at the Southeastern tip of the island approximately 3.5 miles from the village). TIGHAR fieldwork on the island has also produced the replacement heel and parts of a sole from a woman's oxford-style, ten eyelet blucher shoe consistent with those manufactured in the United States during the mid-1930s. TIGHAR archival investigations on Tarawa and in England have produced official British

<sup>7</sup> "The Crash at Sydney Island," [TIGHAR Tracks Vol. 14, No. 2](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Archivessubject.html), page 15 (Accessed November 22, 2014); "The Crash at Sydney Island," <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Archivessubject.html> (Accessed November 22, 2014). Manra Island was formerly known as Sydney Island. On December 17, 1943 a United States Army Air Forces Douglas C-47A Skytrain crash-landed on Sydney. The crash was witnessed by I-Kiribati settlers, who ran to the burning wreckage. Of the nine aboard the cargo plane only one man survived, but he died minutes. If the tengabingabi used by I-Kiribati settlers on Nikumaroro were indeed made from aircraft aluminum as they insist, likely sources would be the nearest documented plane crashes. The Manra/Sydney Island wreck is 226 miles from Nikumaroro. Two Consolidated B-24 Liberator aircraft crashed at Canton Island (237 miles from Nikumaroro) during World War II. No aircraft parts found on Nikumaroro have been determined to be from a C-47A, but many have been conclusively linked to a B-24. See "Aircraft lost in the vicinity of Nikumaroro," [http://tighar.org/wiki/Aircraft\\_lost\\_in\\_the\\_vicinity\\_of\\_Nikumaroro](http://tighar.org/wiki/Aircraft_lost_in_the_vicinity_of_Nikumaroro) (Accessed November 28, 2014). TIGHAR posits a third source for aircraft parts may be an undocumented crash on Nikumaroro. Artifact 2-2-V-1 is not from a C-47A or a B-24, but current research indicates it may be from a Lockheed Electra. Interviews with other former residents of Nikumaroro (not among the Solomons respondents) have stated an aircraft wreck existed on Nikumaroro. See "The Carpenter's Daughter," and "I Saw Pieces of an Airplane," both at <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Archivessubject.html>.

correspondence affirming that parts of a woman's shoe and parts of a man's shoe were found with the bones of a castaway suspected at the time as possibly be the remains of Amelia Earhart. The tengabingabi described by Teauama fits the general description of TIGHAR artifact 2-2-V-1 found on Nikumaroro in 1991. Forensic imaging conducted in 2014 strongly suggests that 2-2-V-1 is the remnant of sheet aluminum attached as a window covering on the starboard fuselage side of Earhart's Lockheed 10E Electra.<sup>8</sup>

Aberaam's descriptions of turtle, bird, clam and fish harvesting on Nikumaroro, including re-locating camp fires, are consistent with those of Taniana Bourika, and thus support an explanation of at least some of the fire features on the Seven Site originating from I-Kiribati activities rather than castaway survival. However, like Taniana, Aberaam does not provide an explanation for the artifacts found on the Seven Site that appear to be consistent with items associated with Earhart. Aberaam said an earthen oven dug to cook the turtle would be "Close to a meter" in depth. If turtles were cooked near Gallagher's far-side house, one feature on the Seven Site (that TIGHAR has hypothesized is the "skull hole" where a human skull found in this general area in 1940 was buried, and then exhumed shortly thereafter) seems to fit the approximate size of an underground oven. The "skull hole" is roughly a meter in depth, but no evidence of fire has been found therein. Gallagher conducted a thorough search of this area, following the skull discovery, and found a dozen more human bones and associated artifacts that led him to speculate, "slight chance that this may be remains of Amelia Earhardt (sic)."<sup>9</sup>

***Mr. Boraing Abera and Mr. Matakite Amerike, ages 70/70, Nikumaroro Village August 25, 2011***

Interviewed together, Boraing arrived at Nikumaroro Island in 1959 as an adult, and Matakite arrived there as a child in 1943. Both confirmed that they had visited Karaka's (Gallagher's) house on the far side of the island, and remembered aluminum being used by the settlers, but neither was aware of human bones found on the island. A technical failure (undiscovered on site at the time) resulted in all audio recordings of this conversation beginning near the end of this interview. Fortunately, the video camera, (and its microphones), worked properly, recording the entire interview both visually and audibly.



*Interview with Boraing Abera and Matakite Amerike, August 25, 2011, Nikumaroro Village.*

The most relevant information from Boraing and Matakite, with regard to the Nikumaroro Hypothesis, is their recollections of the use of aluminum in the village, which they believe came from Manra or Canton, and of Gallagher's house on Takapi, the far side of the island. The

8 Gary F. Quigg, "Fieldnotes, Nikumaroro V Expedition, July/August 2007"; "The Wreck of the Norwich City," <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/ResearchPapers/WreckNorwichCity.html> (Accessed November 22, 2014); "USCG LORAN Station," [http://tighar.org/wiki/USCG\\_LORAN\\_Station](http://tighar.org/wiki/USCG_LORAN_Station) (Accessed November 23, 2014); "A Shoe Fetish, Part 2," [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/31\\_ShoeFetish2/31\\_ShoeFetish2.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/31_ShoeFetish2/31_ShoeFetish2.html) (Accessed November 23, 2014); "Telegrams Concerning Bones Found on Gardner Island 1940," The Tarawa Archives, [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/31\\_ShoeFetish2/31\\_ShoeFetish2.htm](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/31_ShoeFetish2/31_ShoeFetish2.htm) (Accessed November 23, 2014); "The Window, the Patch, & the Artifact," [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/73\\_StepbyStep/73\\_Step\\_by\\_Step.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/73_StepbyStep/73_Step_by_Step.html) (Accessed November 23, 2014); "A Smoking Gun?" [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/72\\_SmokingGun/72\\_Smoking\\_Gun.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/72_SmokingGun/72_Smoking_Gun.html) (Accessed November 23, 2014). The Norwich City, a 397 foot-long freighter, ran aground on Nikumaroro reef during a storm on November 29, 1929. Though intact in 1937, only the keel, boiler tanks and steam are recognizable at present. The United States Coast Guard had a LORAN (LONG RANGE Navigation) radio station on Nikumaroro from 1944-1946.

9 "Mysteries of the Seven Site," [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/33\\_SevenMysteries/33\\_SevenMysteries.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/33_SevenMysteries/33_SevenMysteries.html) (Accessed November 23, 2014); "Telegrams Concerning Bones Found on Gardner Island 1940." The Tarawa Archives, [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Tarawa\\_Archives/Tarawa\\_Archives.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Tarawa_Archives/Tarawa_Archives.html) (Accessed November 23, 2014).

pair remembered some of the aluminum being made into combs. Both respondents recall Gallagher's house was deteriorating when they were there. Four of the five male respondents who lived on Nikumaroro, (excepting Dr. Amerike who was only there for two years as a young boy), and all three of the female respondents, recall that this house was utilized repeatedly over the years by I-Kiribati settlers. Again, such usage may account for some of the archaeological data found on the Seven Site.<sup>10</sup>

**Dr. Teinamati Amerike, age 77, Nikumaroro Village August 25, 2011**



*Interview with Teinamati Amerike, M.D. August 25, 2011, Nikumaroro Village*

Teinamati is Matakite Amerike's older brother. Teinamati arrived on Nikumaroro Island in 1942 and left in 1944 to attend primary and secondary school on Tarawa. His only memory from these two years is exploring the shipwreck with other boys. Following his schooling on Tarawa, Teinamati went to Suva, Fiji to attend the Central Medical School where he studied under Dr. David Winn Hoodless, the physician who examined the bones found by Gallagher on Nikumaroro in 1940. Dr. Amerike graduated in 1954 and returned to Nikumaroro Island in 1963 just prior to the colony's abandonment. He served as Native Medical Practitioner on two of the resettlement trips from Nikumaroro Island to the Solomon Islands. This interview was conducted in English, as Teinamati is fluent in the language.<sup>11</sup>

Due to his short time on Nikumaroro, Dr. Amerike had no information related to TIGHAR's Nikumaroro Hypothesis. However, his role as a Native Medical Practitioner serving on resettlement trips in 1963 and 1964 from Nikumaroro to the Solomon Islands is of historical interest, providing some insight into mid twentieth century healthcare services in the Phoenix Islands, and on the closure of the colony.

**Mr. Joseph Nemaia, age 61, Honiara, August 27 and 28, 2011**

Born on Nikumaroro in 1950, Joseph left the island with his family in 1951. Though he has no memories of the island, his parents (Nemaia Tebarere and Martina [Kiron] Tebarere, who were among the first wave of settlers to Nikumaroro Island in 1939)

<sup>10</sup> "Found Objects," <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Archivessubject.html> (Accessed November 24, 2014). TIGHAR archaeological investigations have recorded small aluminum combs made from aircraft aluminum in the former village area on Nikumaroro.

<sup>11</sup> "The Bones Chronology," [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Bones\\_Chronology.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Bones_Chronology.html) (Accessed November 17, 2014); "Amelia Earhart's Bones and Shoes," [http://tighar.org/Publications/TTracks/14\\_2/14-2Bones.html](http://tighar.org/Publications/TTracks/14_2/14-2Bones.html) (Accessed November 17, 2014); "1999 Bones Search I," [http://tighar.org/wiki/1999\\_Bones\\_Search\\_I](http://tighar.org/wiki/1999_Bones_Search_I) (Accessed November 17, 2014); "Fiji Bones Search II Final Report," [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/42\\_FijiBoneSearch.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/42_FijiBoneSearch.html) (Accessed November 17, 2014). In April 1941 David Winn Hoodless, M.D., Principal of the Central Medical School in Suva, received the skull and bones found on Nikumaroro the previous year and performed a detailed analysis of the remains. The conclusions of his report, available in the first two sources listed above, opined that these were the remains of a male between 45 and 55 years of age, possibly, "of a short, stocky, muscular European or even a half-caste, or a person of mixed European descent." The disposition of the remains is unknown. TIGHAR has mounted three research expeditions to Suva in search of the bones with negative results.

Present-day forensic anthropologists who have examined Dr. Hoodless' measurements of the Nikumaroro remains reached a different conclusion; their analyses suggest the bones are those of a female of Nordic-European descent. See "Amelia Earhart's Bones and Shoes," <http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Archivessubject.html> (Accessed November 29, 2014).



*Interview with Joseph Nemaia August 28, 2011, Honiara, Guadalcanal*

shared their memories of the island with him. This interview was also conducted in English as Joseph is fluent in the language.



*TIGHAR artifact 2-2-V-1, recovered on Nikumaroro in 1991*

Information relevant to the Nikumaroro Hypothesis, as told to Joseph by his parents, includes descriptions consistent with artifacts TIGHAR has recovered from the island. First, Joseph described a large tray used to collect coconut scrapings (a tengabingabi) as being made of “airplane aluminum” from Nikumaroro Island. Joseph described the tengabingabi as being about one foot by two feet in size, very thin, with rivet holes. He does not know where the tengabingabi is now, but knows it was kept with the family throughout their moves from Nikumaroro to Manra to Ghizo to Guadalcanal. The tengabingabi described by Joseph is generally

consistent with both the tengabingabi described by Teauama Abera as well as TIGHAR artifact 2-2-V-1.

Second, Joseph explained that his uncle, Taumarea Nemaia, made “aluminum combs out of aeroplane metal.” TIGHAR has located, and recovered, combs in the former village area made from aircraft aluminum.

Joseph’s comments on turtle and bird hunting are also of interest, as they differ from Taniana Bourika’s memories. In addition to opining that captured turtles would be taken back to the village rather than consumed on site, Joseph explained that British colonial law limited the number of turtles that could be harvested (no more than one per night), and allowed only three days for turtle eggs to be collected each year. With regard to bird hunting, Joseph explained that birds were both consumed where harvested and taken back to the village.



Map of Nikumaroro, Kiribati<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusions

Analysis of the data (anecdotal evidence) obtained in the Solomons during this expedition, relevant to the Nikumaroro Hypothesis, resulted in the following discoveries:

- **New anecdotal evidence on what may be aircraft related artifacts on Nikumaroro Island heretofore unknown to TIGHAR, along with the general location of their discovery.**

Taniana Bourika: “As kids used to play around on the island, we used to find pieces of metal in Nairapu. As I think back now one of the things we played with included something that looked like the door of an airplane. These things were near Bauareke, further inland, not on the beach.”

- **New anecdotal evidence on the existence of shoes discovered on Nikumaroro, location unknown.**

Aberaam and Teauama Abera: “There were shoes. Complete set of shoes. As if someone walked away from them and died from them, and left them.”

Gerald Gallagher reported finding a skull and ten other human bones along with “part of a shoe” he believed to be “a womans (sic) and probably size 10” on Nikumaroro in September 1940 on the “South East corner of island.” In 1991, TIGHAR found a shoe heel and numerous fragments of a shoe sole in the area known as Aukeraime on Nikumaroro. The Aukairame shoe heel was determined to have

12 “Place Names on Nikumaroro,” [http://tighar.org/wiki/Place\\_Names\\_on\\_Nikumaroro](http://tighar.org/wiki/Place_Names_on_Nikumaroro) (Accessed November 22, 2014). Areas referenced by respondents are in white text. Land areas as named by the I-Kiribati settlers are in yellow text.

been manufactured in the United States by the Cat's Paw Rubber Company during the 1930s. Experts at the Biltrite Corporation (owner of CPRC) opined the stitching on the sole remnants was indicative of a woman's shoe. The 1991 shoe discovery site is across the lagoon from the Seven Site, which TIGHAR posits is the 1940 bones discovery site and location of Gallagher's far side house.<sup>13</sup>



Gerald Gallagher, c. 1936

- **New anecdotal information on the possible origins of some of the archaeological data (fire features, turtle, fish and bird bones) recorded at the Seven Site.**

Taniana Bourika, Aberaam Abera, Boraing Abera and Matakite Amerike shared memories of turtle, fish and bird harvesting on the far side of the island, in association with the house built for Gallagher there. Taniana and Aberaam stated that multiple camp fire sites were utilized during hunting and fishing trips, rather than a single burn area, and that the catch was sometimes consumed there.

TIGHAR has recorded numerous fire features (camp fire remains) on the Seven Site that included turtle, fish, and bird bones. In his 1940 bones discovery telegram, Gallagher reports, “remains of fire, turtle and dead birds.” It is important to note Gallagher describes fire features in 1940, which would pre-date any camp fire remains created by the I-Kiribati settlers on the Seven Site.<sup>14</sup>

- **New anecdotal information on the use of aircraft aluminum by colonists on Nikumaroro Island.**

Teauama Abera and Joseph Nemaia related information about what they called “airplane aluminum” being used by village families as a *tengabingabi*, a platter or tray that coconut meat is scraped onto when harvested. Nemaia reported “aluminum combs out of aeroplane metal” being made in the village. TIGHAR has recovered an artifact (2-2-V-1) that matches the description of a *tengabingabi*, and combs, in the former village area on Nikumaroro made of aircraft aluminum.<sup>15</sup>

- **New anecdotal information on the use of “Karakas house” (Gallagher) by colonists on Nikumaroro Island.**

Seven of the nine respondents recalled that the house built for Gallagher on the far side of the island (Takapi) was maintained and used repeatedly by the settlers for years after Gallagher's death. Three respondents remembered a tank at this location as well.

TIGHAR posits that the archaeological evidence composing the Seven Site is at or near the location where Gallagher's house was located. Numerous artifacts and possible remnants of a structure (corrugated metal sheets, a steel tank, and composite siding) have been recorded, and in some cases recovered, on site. The Solomons interviews provide the first anecdotal evidence of a tank at the house.

---

13 “Telegrams Concerning Bones Found on Gardner Island 1940.” The Tarawa Archives, [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Tarawa\\_Archives/Tarawa\\_Archives.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Tarawa_Archives/Tarawa_Archives.html) (Accessed November 23, 2014); “Shoe Fetish,” [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/29\\_ShoeFetish1/29\\_ShoeFetish1.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/Bulletins/29_ShoeFetish1/29_ShoeFetish1.html) (Accessed November 19, 2014). Gallagher also found a sextant box and a Benedictine bottle. All items went to Suva, where the bones (thirteen, rather than eleven as first reported) were examined by Dr. Hoodless. The disposition of the bones and artifacts after April of 1941 is unknown.

14 “Telegrams Concerning Bones Found on Gardner Island 1940.” The Tarawa Archives, [http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Tarawa\\_Archives/Tarawa\\_Archives.html](http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Tarawa_Archives/Tarawa_Archives.html) (Accessed November 23, 2014). Hypothetically, if the settlers did not create the fire features Gallagher reported, a castaway may have.

15 The Aberas thought the aircraft aluminum came from Manra (Sydney) or Nikumaroro, and Mr. Nemaia said it came from Nikumaroro. Boraing Abera and Matakite Amerike stated combs were made in the village from aluminum originating on Manra (Sydney) or Canton, but they did not specify aircraft aluminum. See the interview transcriptions in the Appendix.



*A steel tank, possibly used to collect rain water, remains extant on Seven Site.*

- **New anecdotal information on the names of geographic locations on Nikumaroro.** Taniana and Ona Bourika, along with Ritema Tapweaitu, identified the area near Baureke passage as Nairapu. Ona and Ritema stated the far side of the island was known as Takapi. The Aberaam and Teauama Abera said the area where Gallagher’s house was located on Takapi was known as Karaka Point.

- **New anecdotal information on the preparation of clams on Nikumaroro.** Taniana Bourika: “Just pick them up and put them by the fire and they will open up.” Aberaam Abera: “They burned them to open them up during the camping days. You cook them to open them up.”

TIGHAR has recorded features consisting of numerous clam shells on the Seven Site. The larger clam shells (*Tridacna*) show evidence of having been forcibly pried open with some kind of tool, rather than being heated. As the prying open of clamshells is inconsistent with traditional I-Kiribati preparation, TIGHAR posits that a castaway from a non-Pacific culture harvested these clams.

## Denouement

The Solomons Expedition Team thanks TIGHAR administration, and the board of directors, for their support. An appendix on the following pages presents edited transcriptions of each interview. Unedited transcriptions of all interviews, and audio recordings, are available by contacting TIGHAR at <http://www.tighar.org>



*The Solomons Team: Karl Kern, John Clauss, Nancy Farrell and Gary Quigg.*



*Sunset off Rawaki Village, Kohinggo.*

## APPENDIX: Edited Transcriptions

### Taniana Bourika

#### Rawaki Village, Kohinggo Island

August 24, 2011

This first interview was conducted in the home of Taniana and Ona (Tionae) Bourika in Rawaki Village on Kohinggo Island. Although this interview was documented by the two audio recorders, the video camera recording failed. Thus, this interview is not available on video. However, still photographs were taken during the conversation. Gary F. Quigg acted as primary interviewer, with other team members asking additional questions where subjects prompted additional inquiry, all listed as “Interviewer” in the transcripts. Baoro Laxton Koraua acted as translator, and it is Mr. Koraua’s English (interpreted from the I-Kiribati spoken by Taniana) that is reproduced in these transcripts as “Respondent.” Quigg edited each transcription for clarity, which included some re-grouping of subject matter and the removal of material unassociated with the Nikumaroro Hypothesis. Earlier complete draft transcriptions, provided by Thomas F. King, Ph.D., and Nancy Farrell, as well as audio recordings of each complete interview, are available by contacting [www.tighar.org](http://www.tighar.org).

- Interviewer: It is August 24, 2011, about five until 9am in Rawaki Village. Would you please give us your name and spell it for us please?
- Respondent: Taniana Bourika (spells name after speaking it).
- Interviewer: How old are you?
- Respondent: 74
- Interviewer: When did you come to Nikumaroro?
- Respondent: My parents moved there at the end of the war in 1945 to help clear the village area. My first memory is that there were hardly any people there. I didn’t quite like it because I had left all my friends on Manra. [This would place Taniana arriving on Nikumaroro at the approximate age of 11].
- Interviewer: Did you live there until the British relocated the people in 1963?
- Respondent: Yes.
- Interviewer: What was daily life like? What did you do every day?
- Respondent: Everybody of working age worked, clearing rock on your block of land. Sundays were very holy days, though, so no work. Fishing most days didn’t take long, a couple of hours now and then.
- Interviewer: Do you remember any big events happening? Or do you remember the U.S. Coast Guard Station?
- Respondent: As kids used to play around on the island, we used to find pieces of metal in Nairapu (spelling unclear). As I think back now one of the things we played with included something that looked like the door of an airplane. These things were near Bauareke, further inland, not on the beach. [Taniana points to map of Nikumaroro indicating Nairapu was near Baureke Passage]. So what they do is they’d have kids sit on it [purported door], and they’d tie it with a rope around it. They’re using it as a toy to tow themselves along the edges of the water or on the land, on the beach, and they’re running with it like that.
- Interviewer: Why was this discovery such a big event?
- Respondent: Because there was so little metal on the island. It was exciting to find it. It has lots of uses.
- Interviewer: What did the metal look like?
- Respondent: Not like iron roofing. More like aluminum used for boats.
- Interviewer: When we’ve been to Nikumaroro, we have found thin, shiny pieces of metal in the old village area. It looks like people in the village were cutting the metal up to make things.
- Respondent: I don’t know. Maybe the first lot that came got the big stuff. All I saw were small parts.
- Interviewer: Did people make things out of this metal?
- Respondent: I know people made such things, but I don’t know what.
- Interviewer: Do you remember the shipwreck?
- Respondent: Yes. We went there for things. We fished there and played there.
- Interviewer: Where else did you go for things?

Respondent: We also got things from the Coast Guard station.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to this side of the island? [Pointing to windward side of island on map]

Respondent: Yes. We hunted for turtles and birds all along that side. We hunted at night for turtles with torches. We would build fires and cook turtles. Gallagher had a house there. Normally we would go and sleep in Gallagher's house because he had left. [Pronounces Gallagher as "Kadaka"].

Interviewer: How did you hear about Gallagher?

Respondent: From stories told about the time he was there, setting up headquarters for Phoenix administration. He was dead then, though.

Interviewer: When you were growing up on the island, were there any places you were told to stay away from?

Respondent: No restrictions on boys. The boys ran all around the island, but not the girls.

Interviewer: Last night you told us a story about birds in Buka trees. Could you tell us that story again?

Respondent: Maybe once a week we would go bird hunting [Points to area of map where Seven Site is located]. We would climb the trees to catch the birds. Frigate birds, and a bigger bird with a white chest. Then we would take them back to the village.

Interviewer: Did you ever cook the birds where you found them?

Respondent: Normally no. We would take them back to the village for everyone to share. If we managed to find a turtle, one was enough.

Interviewer: How did you prepare the birds to eat?

Respondent: Chop off the wings and legs. Peel off the skin.

Interviewer: How did you prepare the turtles?

Respondent: Suffocate them. Open chest to clean them out. Put meat back into the shell and put shell in earth oven to cover and cook.

Interviewer: How were the birds cooked?

Respondent: In stone oven, usually for feasting.

Interviewer: Was anything on the turtle not used?

Respondent: We ate everything except the shell. Even the cartilage in the shell is edible. Only the bones, scales and shell were left.

Interviewer: Did you catch and eat the smaller turtles and the babies?

Respondent: No, only the big ones.

Interviewer: What kind of fish did you like to catch?

Respondent: We fished in the lagoon or off the reef for pelagic fish. Milk fish are very bony, but it depends on where you fish.

Interviewer: Were you using nets or hooks to fish?

Respondent: Gill nets, but line fishing for pelagic big fish off the reef.

Interviewer: Did you need something to protect the end of the line from the teeth of the fish?

Respondent: Yes, we would need a wire tracer for catching big fish. People would pick this up wherever, sometimes Canton. Any form of wire rolled and brought back. So valuable.

Interviewer: Did you catch little fish in the tidal pools on the reef?

Respondent: Yes, but we didn't need to go to the other side of the island for them. We could catch those right next to the village, torch fishing.

Interviewer: Did you collect clams and shellfish?

Respondent: Yes, inside the lagoon. There were those stuck on the coral or just sitting there. Just pick them up and put them by a fire and they will open up. We wouldn't normally eat them unless we had a craving. We would use them for bait. If we cooked them, we would boil them or roast them on a fire. Even the tiny clams could be used for bait, maybe kids eat them, or we use them to scoop coconut.

Interviewer: Besides the metal you found, did you find anything else unusual on the island?

Respondent: The Coast Guard station was the main attraction for boys.

Interviewer: Did you ever hear stories of human bones found on the island?

Respondent: Rumors, but not too sure.

Interviewer: Do you know why Gallagher had a camp away from the village?  
Respondent: Nobody knows, but everybody said he needed to get away from people.  
Interviewer: [Showing photo of tank at Seven Site]  
Respondent: For Mr. Gallagher.  
Interviewer: Was the tank and Gallagher's house used after he was gone?  
Respondent: Yes, I think possibly by the magistrate. Kids would also stay there when hunting turtles.  
Interviewer: Would the kids who stayed there catch and cook fish?  
Respondent: Yes, we would build fires and cook fish there.  
Interviewer: Were your fires kept in one place, or moved around?  
Respondent: No designated spot. Ground is ground. Cooking is cooking.  
Interviewer: How big was Gallagher's house away from the village? What did it look like?  
Respondent: Maybe 3 meters. Made of leaves; not corrugated.  
Interviewer: Do you have anything today from Nikumaroro?  
Respondent: We have some stainless steel dishes from Canton that were brought to Nikumaroro and then to the Solomons. They are now with our son.  
Interviewer: Did you take a lot of things with you when you left Nikumaroro?  
Respondent: Yes, we took everything we could, even the roofing and fronds for flooring.  
Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?  
Respondent: Just nice to remember the place.  
Interviewer: This is one of the things we found on Nikumaroro. Do you recognize it? [Shows Taniana photos of asphalt roofing material.]  
Respondent: No. I am not familiar with it.  
Interviewer: Do you remember any aircraft landing in the lagoon?  
Respondent: Yes. Once or twice a seaplane landed. I assumed it was there to check on the American base.  
Interviewer: Thank you for your time and for sharing your memories.  
Respondent: You are welcome.

**Ona (Tione) Bourika/Ritema Tapweaitu**  
**Rawaki Village, Kohinggo Island**  
**August 24, 2011**

The second interview was also conducted in the home of Taniana and Ona (Tionae) Bourika in Rawaki Village on Kohinggo Island. Ona (Tione) Bourika, the wife of Taniana Bourika, and her life-long friend Ritema Tapweaitu were interviewed together here. Although this interview was documented by the two audio recorders, the video camera recording failed. Thus, this interview is also not available on video. However, still photographs were taken during the conversation. Gary F. Quigg acted as primary interviewer, with other team members asking additional questions where subjects prompted additional inquiry, all listed as "Interviewer" in the transcripts. Baoro Laxton Koraua acted as translator, and it is Mr. Koraua's English (interpreted from the I-Kiribati spoken by Ona and Ritema) that is reproduced in these transcripts as "Respondent." Quigg edited each transcription for clarity, which included some re-grouping of subject matter and the removal of material unassociated with the Nikumaroro Hypothesis. Earlier complete draft transcriptions, provided by TIGHAR members Thomas F. King, PhD and Nancy Farrell, and by TIGHAR intern by Madeline Corsaro, as well as audio recordings of each complete interview, are available by contacting [www.tighar.org](http://www.tighar.org).

Interviewer: It is August 24, 2011 in Rawaki Village. Would you both please give us your names and spell them for us please?  
Respondent: Ona (Tione) Bourika. Ritema Tapweaitu (both spell their names after speaking them).

Interviewer: How old are you?  
Respondent: Both are 74.  
Interviewer: Ona, when did you come to Nikumaroro?  
Respondent: 1952  
Interviewer: How old were you?  
Respondent: Thirteen years of age.  
Interviewer: And Ritema?  
Respondent: She can't remember, but she actually...they came across the same time as Taniana. Same boat, same trip. So, that would be 1945.  
Interviewer: Both of you lived on Nikumaroro until it was abandoned, until you all had to leave is that right?  
Respondent: Yes. Came straight here.  
Interviewer: Tell me some of your memories of living on Nikumaroro.  
Respondent: They have been great friends since they were kids. They go to school together. After school they do their chores together. Quite regularly they would be doing house work together.  
Interviewer: Taniana told us that the boys would go all over the island and find things. Did the girls also explore the island?  
Respondent: They do, but only on school excursions with the lady minister's wife that chaperones them. She was the wife of Reverend Tikieru, both Kiribati.  
Interviewer: What parts of the island would you go to on your excursions?  
Respondent: Aukairame and Nairapu (spelling unclear). Where there were Pandanus trees. They really only leave the village on excursions, otherwise they were usually around the family. Especially in Kiribati custom, if you're going to be noticed as the marry-able type, you gotta be making sure you're sitting down quietly and being respectable and looking after homely things.  
Interviewer: For both of you, Taniana talked about the boys finding things on the island, and finding metal on the island, and they would play with it. I wondered if you ever found any metal on the island, or if you saw people working with metal that came from somewhere on the island?  
Respondent: No, they don't hear of anything, the only thing they saw is similar to what Taniana said, that one stuck in their mind they all saw because that's where they'd go to cut Pandanus.  
Interviewer: So how do they describe what they saw?  
Respondent: It looks like a door. Now she think about it today, she thought it looks like a car door, you know, it's got a handle on it, as she tries to recollect what she saw.  
Interviewer: Does she remember what style of handle, was it a "T" handle?  
Respondent: Yeah.  
Interviewer: Taniana showed us where the boys found the metal. Can you show us where you remember seeing it?  
Respondent: [Both point to same area on map as Taniana did].  
Interviewer: Was there anywhere else on the island that people found things and brought them to the village?  
Respondent: [No clear answer].  
Interviewer: Taniana told us about being on this area of the island [points to SE part of the island, windward shore on map] when they were hunting turtles. Did you ever go to that side of the island?  
Respondent: They would normally go there with their parents, if they are going to collect, gather for food, that's where easy to get fishing.  
Interviewer: Where is that?  
Respondent: What they call Takapi, which is the far side of the island. Where Gallagher's holiday house is. The whole coast there, it's called Takapi, meaning the bottom.  
Interviewer: Do either of you remember Gallagher or Karaka's house on the far side of the island?  
Respondent: She remembers seeing it, but she never thought about it, because, like, it wasn't important to her, so it never registered in her mind. For him [Taniana] it probably would have, because he would have laid there and slept and whatnot.  
Interviewer: Taniana had heard stories or rumors of human bones being found on the island. Did you ever hear any stories of information like that?

Respondent: They can't tell. There were rumors men were digging, but they can't confirm whether there were bones.

Interviewer: If someone found bones, how deep would they likely bury them? Would it be shallow just to get them out of sight, or would it be deep?

Respondent: They wouldn't dig that deep to bury them. They'll dig deep enough, but not too deep. Because it's only bones. Between a foot and two feet deep. It's only when got flesh on them that we put them down further.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and for sharing your memories.

Respondent: You are welcome.

**Aberaam and Teauama Abera**  
**Nikumaroro Village, Vaghena Island**  
**August 25, 2011**

The third interview was conducted in the maneaba of Nikumaroro Village on Vaghena Island. Aberaam and Teauama Abera, husband and wife, were interviewed together here. This interview was documented by the two audio recorders and the video camera. Still photographs were also taken during the conversation. Gary F. Quigg acted as primary interviewer, with other team members asking additional questions where subjects prompted additional inquiry, all listed as "Interviewer" in the transcripts. Baoro Laxton Koraua acted as translator, and it is Mr. Koraua's English (interpreted from the I-Kiribati spoken by Aberaam and Teauama) that is reproduced in these transcripts as "Respondent." Quigg edited each transcription for clarity, which included some re-grouping of subject matter and the removal of material unassociated with the Nikumaroro Hypothesis. A complete draft transcription, provided by TIGHAR intern Madeline Corsaro, as well as audio recordings of each complete interview, are available by contacting [www.tighar.org](http://www.tighar.org).

Interviewer: It's August 25, 2011 at about 1130am here in Nikumaroro Village. Would you both please tell me your names and spell them for me as well?

Respondent: Aberaam Abera. Teauama Abera. (both spell their names after speaking them).

Interviewer: How old are you?

Respondent: Aberaam is 71 and Teauama is 68.

Interviewer: When did you come to Nikumaroro?

Respondent: Both were born there, Aberaam in 1940 and Teauama in 1943.

Interviewer: And you both lived on Nikumaroro from the time you were born until the people left the island?

Respondent: They stayed there, until they came here.

Interviewer: When you think of Nikumaroro, what memories come to mind for both of you?

Respondent: To him, he remembers Nikumaroro very well for the ease with which they could feed themselves and their families. Fishing is easy, gathering food from the bushes is easy, coconuts, plenty toddy there, battery, the green stuff that grows on the beach you can actually cut and use as cabbage. So, within thirty minutes you can feed a whole family for the day. So, it's quite a difference from coming here. It was an easier life for them, she agrees.

Interviewer: Can you describe for me what a day was like on Nikumaroro?

Respondent: He'd cut toddy in the morning, do a bit of chores he's been handed down from his parents, like grinding a few coconut trees, or go to a clearing up, or go to school.

She would wake up in the morning, and as a young, growing up girl she would do the chores, clean up the house, do the washing for the family, cook the food, and go to school. Learning the Kiribati way of doing things, like mats. It's a handing down process from mother or grandmother to daughter.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything that happened on the island that might have been considered a big event while you were there?

Respondent: They can remember the commissioner arriving. He comes and visited the common people and the

offices of the government. They were small and running around doing their own thing.

Interviewer: Have you heard of Mr. Gallagher?

Respondent: Yes. He died before them obviously, but they did remember that---they did hear all the stories about him.

Interviewer: Do they remember any of the stories?

Respondent: While he was there, he wanted Nikumaroro to be the headquarters of the Phoenix Islands. Also, when he was ill, he wanted to make sure he was buried there. He advised the people that he must be buried there because he's come to love the people of the island. So those were things that stood out, that is, on their minds. Mr. Gallagher was a very good man to the people.

Interviewer: Do you have memories of the shipwreck on the island? Did people go out to the shipwreck?

Respondent: He walked through the decking and it broke through, and he had a big cut on his leg.

Interviewer: When you would visit the shipwreck, were you looking for anything in particular?

Respondent: Before, they all were there to pick up brass, but later on it was just for the boys to play around.

Interviewer: Would you remember when the back half, or the stern of the ship, broke off the reef?

Respondent: As a kid he remembers when they went onboard it was a complete ship...but over time, finally, the thing broke away.

Interviewer: Did any of the things taken from the shipwreck go for use in the village?

Respondent: Yeah...anything that was metal and usable.

Interviewer: We have found pieces from the shipwreck in the area where the village used to be, and we've also found metal there that apparently is not from the shipwreck. It's light grey-silver, very thin, and it can be bent. Do you remember metal like that?

Respondent: They only remember vividly the two places where there's bountiful, there's plenty metals to play with and pick up and bring home for use. That's from the American leftovers and the old ship.

Interviewer: So people would take things from Norwich City to use in the village, and people would take things from the Coast Guard station to use in the village. Was there anything that you thought was unusual that you found on the island? Anything that didn't make sense to be there?

Respondent: Very good. Wow. This is story from their grandfather. This one's grandfather, Barry. His story go like this. There were shoes. Complete set of shoes. As if someone has walked away from them and died from them, and left them. That's what he say. She's trying to recall where the grandfather said they found those. [Teauama is unable to recall location of shoes].

Interviewer: Did you ever go to the far sector?

Respondent: Gallagher had a camp house there, somewhere. On the other side. There also was a tank there. By the time they grew up the house was gone.

Interviewer: Do you know why Gallagher had a house there?

Respondent: They don't know why, but he was the one who built the place there, he wanted it to be built for him there, so that is, later on to become Karaka, Karaka Point. They heard he quite regularly went there. People would go to Karaka's house, after he died.

Interviewer: What were the people doing there? What were they doing on that part of the island?

Respondent: They kept the place clean over time. Ah, but there's a vacant spot. From their memory, there used to be a vacant spot they would go across as kids they would go across boats...the row boats. They'd all go, even when Gallagher died, uh, because of his memory and because the people they'd go there and keep the place clean. Yeah, they weren't quite there, they were too young to be there, but they remember being in those boats all going whether there was a working party or not, but they all go across. And when that lot goes back, another lot would go. Whether it's actually rotated or not there, but there seems to be a number of people that regularly go there. From their memory. They'd go there a few days and come back again. But they don't know what they went there for.

Interviewer: Do you know anything about stories, or rumors, of bones being found?

Respondent: They did find some where the old village...where the village was where the church was, when they were digging...obviously old settlements...every now and then you'd pick up a bone...where it was settled. But they haven't heard of any other bones anywhere else. There must've been settlements there, at the... where the passage was, so that they pick up a bone or two while digging there.

Interviewer: Settlements from Gilbertese who were there earlier, or way before?

Respondent: Way before, probably prehistoric, or like I was saying, I think there were Tahitians who went through there as well. I think they tried to do a coconut plantation there some stage.

Interviewer: Just a follow-up question about Karaka's house. When the people would go there and stay to keep it clean, they also cooked there, built fires?

Respondent: Yeah, like in camping, in the typical, as I was saying, Kiribati culture you know, when you in the bush, the only thing you carry is a pot, or whatever to cook with.

Interviewer: Did they use the same fire for different visits, or the same place for the fire? Or did they move the fire?

Respondent: The only one that would not move is the trapper. When you cook a turtle whole, because it's a dug pit that you're going to cook it under. That would be the only one that wouldn't move. The others would move.

Interviewer: How deep would they dig it?

Respondent: Close to a meter.

Interviewer: And that hole would get re-used?

Respondent: Yeah that would be the only one, because you're not gonna go and dig it again.

Interviewer: Did you ever go out on the reef at low tide and catch fish that had been trapped in the little pools on the reef?

Respondent: Mostly picked up at night during the torch. So you are using a light to fish. They don't normally go here [points to windward side of Nikumaroro on map] because it's such a long distance to go. So, they'd normally just do a lot of their fishing along this side [points to leeward side of Nikumaroro on map].

Interviewer: Did you ever catch birds to eat on Nikumaroro?

Respondent: Before, they used to collect them on the ground. There was that many, they used to collect them on the ground. Gradually, the birds got smarter, or maybe fewer, so they had to climb up the Buka trees to get the birds.

Interviewer: How would they prepare the birds for cooking?

Respondent: Cut the wings off. They don't take the feathers off, so they'd just break off a bit of the neck here and they'd just peel it backwards. Usually the bigger ones, like Tetaota (sp?) and Tete (sp?) and Teboba (sp?). We don't know the English names for those so you'll have to find out what those are. Usually boiled or ovened in the ground.

Interviewer: Did you gather and eat clams as well?

Respondent: They burned them to open them up during the camping days. You cook them to open them.

Interviewer: When you came here to Nikumaroro Village from Nikumaroro (Island), did you bring anything with you from the island? Something that you might want to hold onto as a keepsake of some sort?

Respondent: Yes. She thinks she might have a tengabingabi, which would be a piece of metal made out of aluminum, cut out of aluminum, but I think her children may have lost it. She knew she brought that. Her father brought that over.

Interviewer: So her father brought a big piece of aluminum?

Respondent: Yeah, for scraping coconut. Everyone did. Everyone did.

Interviewer: So, you used aluminum for scraping the coconuts?

Respondent: No, we used the aluminum to collect the coconut as you scrape. You scape onto there. Like a plate.

Interviewer: Would she describe the aluminum sheet to us? Color? Did it have any holes in it or anything?

Respondent: Ah, it's aluminum, but she can't recall whether there was holes in it or not, she's forgotten, but she's forgotten where the children have lost it. They played with it.

Interviewer: Does she know where her father got the aluminum?

Respondent: She wouldn't know where it came from, it could have come from Manra or Nikumaroro, but we don't know. She has no idea, but they do know there was an aeroplane on Manra. I think it fell into the lagoon there. Quite a lot of people used to cut that up, take this and that. If people come across from Manra, and they hardly come across, once every sixth months you might change places, then you might get a piece of aluminum off that aeroplane. That particular one. I think it's a war-time plane.16

Interviewer: Was there any plane wreckage on Nikumaroro?

Respondent: No. They wouldn't know.

Interviewer: Was there an area on Nikumaroro that was used as a rubbish area, disposal area, what we would call a dump?

Respondent: Each person look after their own trash, and don't forget, in Kiribati, things like pieces of metal don't become trash. They would be used, even if it is a broken piece.

Interviewer: Is there anything else we haven't talked about that you'd like to tell us about Nikumaroro?

Respondent: [No response].

Interviewer: I would like you to take a look through this book and tell me if the photographs remind you of anything. I was asking about the metal that we find there. This one we found near the Co-op store. Do you remember seeing this on the island? [Points to photo of TIGHAR artifact 2-2-V-1 in book]. Is this like what her father found?

Respondent: Yeah. Yeah. It was similar.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

## **Boraing Abera and Matakite Amerike**

### **Nikumaroro Village, Vaghena Island**

**August 25, 2011**

The fourth interview was conducted in the maneaba of Nikumaroro Village on Vaghena Island. Boraing Abera and Matakite Amerike (unrelated friends), were interviewed together here. This interview was documented by the two audio recorders and the video camera. Still photographs were also taken during the conversation. Gary F. Quigg acted as primary interviewer, with other team members asking additional questions where subjects prompted additional inquiry, all listed as "Interviewer" in the transcripts. Baoro Laxton Koraua acted as translator, and it is Mr. Koraua's English (interpreted from the I-Kiribati spoken by Boraing and Matakite) that is reproduced in these transcripts as "Respondent." Quigg edited each transcription for clarity, which included some re-grouping of subject matter and the removal of material unassociated with the Nikumaroro Hypothesis. A draft transcription, provided by TIGHAR intern Madeline Corsaro, as well as audio recordings of each complete interview, are available by contacting [www.tighar.org](http://www.tighar.org)

Interviewer: It's August 25, 2011 in Nikumaroro Village. Would you both please tell me your names and spell them for me as well?

Respondent: Boraing Abera. Matakite Amerike. (Both spell their names after speaking them).

Interviewer: Boraing, you came to Nikumaroro in 1959 as a child, and Matakite in 1943?

Respondent: Boraing came to Nikumaroro Island as an adult, in 1959 and Matakite came in 1943 as a child. Both are 70 years old.

Interviewer: Did you both live on Nikumaroro until the people left the island?

Respondent: Boraing stayed until 1963, and Matakite left in 1959.

Interviewer: I'd like to know, from both of you, what your memories of Nikumaroro are?

Respondent: They both remember roaming the whole island, everywhere.

Interviewer: Did you go out to the shipwreck?

Respondent: Yes, that's where they would go to catch sharks.

Interviewer: Did you go to the far side of the island?

Respondent: Yes, they would go on fishing expeditions there. They would also go there to get the red crabs for bait. They would also go get the big coconut crabs there.

Interviewer: Do both of you have memories of the house built for Gallagher there?

Respondent: Yes, they remember the place. It was in disarray as Matakite remembers it, but by the time Boraing was there it was just the posts.

Interviewer: When we go to Nikumaroro we always find shiny metal pieces we call aluminum. Do you know where

those pieces may have come from?

Respondent: Some come from Manra and some from Canton. Anything that would be useful in the village. One guy made combs from this and would sell them to other people on the island. So the aluminum he made them from must've come from those places.

Interviewer: Do you know of any human bones that were found on the island?

Respondent: They can't recall.

Interviewer: Is there anything about Nikumaroro you would like to tell us that we haven't talked about?

Respondent: They will always remember the times when the passages would close and all the fish in the lagoon would die.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your memories with us today.

**Teinamati Amerike, M.D.**  
**Nikumaroro Village, Vaghena Island**  
**August 25, 2011**

The fifth interview was conducted in subject's home in Nikumaroro Village on Vaghena Island. Dr. Teinamati Amerike is the older brother of Matakite Amerike (fourth interview). This interview was documented by the two audio recorders and the video camera. Still photographs were also taken during the conversation. Gary F. Quigg acted as primary interviewer, with other team members asking additional questions where subjects prompted additional inquiry, all listed as "Interviewer" in the transcripts. Baoro Laxton Koraua was present as translator, but Dr. Amerike is fluent in English and it is his own spoken word that is reproduced in these transcripts as "Respondent." Quigg edited each transcription for clarity, which included some re-grouping of subject matter and the removal of material unassociated with the Nikumaroro Hypothesis. A draft transcription, provided by TIGHAR intern Madeline Corsaro, as well as audio recordings of each complete interview, are available by contacting [www.tighar.org](http://www.tighar.org).

Interviewer: It's August 25, 2011 at 2:20pm in the afternoon in Nikumaroro Village. Would you please tell me your name and spell it as well?

Respondent: Teinamati Amerike (spells out name).

Interviewer: You were born in 1934?

Respondent: Yes. (Dr. Amerike was 77 years old at the time of this interview).

Interviewer: When did you come to Nikumaroro?

Respondent: To Nikumaroro? Um, 1942.

Interviewer: You stayed until 1963, or did you leave before the colony was abandoned?

Respondent: I went to Tarawa in 1944 and attend the primary school, and then go to secondary school, and from the secondary school I went to the medical school in Suva.

Interviewer: Central Medical School?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you remember Dr. Hoodless?

Respondent: Yeah. I do. He was there.

Interviewer: When did you graduate from Central Medical School?

Respondent: Oh. 1954.

Interviewer: What memories do you have of growing up on Nikumaroro?

Respondent: Hunting turtles. Exploring.

Interviewer: Did you explore the shipwreck?

Respondent: Yeah we went to go and look at the shipwreck then, at a place called Nutiran.

Interviewer: Was there anything unusual that you saw on the island as a boy?  
Respondent: No. I can't recall.  
Interviewer: One of the things we have found on the island are small, shiny pieces of metal that have been cut-up into very small pieces. The pieces are aluminum. Do you know where this aluminum may have come from?  
Respondent: Maybe from the Americans. Americans settled there for some time during the war. Maybe from them. I don't know.  
Interviewer: Were people in the village trading with people in the American Coast Guard?  
Respondent: Don't know.  
Interviewer: Do you remember a man we would call Gallagher?  
Respondent: Karaka?  
Interviewer: Yes.  
Respondent: He was a district commissioner, and he died on the island. He was buried there.  
Interviewer: People told us there was a house built for Karaka on the far side of the island. Do you remember that?  
Respondent: No. I can't remember.  
Interviewer: We've also heard stories there were human bones found on the island. Had you heard anything about that?  
Respondent: I hadn't. No. Nothing about it. I left the island when I was small, so I couldn't recall.  
Interviewer: You came in 1942 and left in 1944, so you were there for two years. Did you ever come back?  
Respondent: When I qualified in early 1954 I went back for leave for two months, then back to Tarawa. Most of my life spent outside Nikumaroro.  
Interviewer: When did you come here, to Nikumaroro Village (Vaghena Island)?  
Respondent: I came with the first lot to get sent over...in 1963. Then back to get second lot. Came back about March 1964, and I stay for one year looking after these people as the medical officer. I was the medical officer on the boats coming.  
Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your memories with us today.  
Respondent: You are welcome.

**Joseph Nemaia**  
**Honiara, Guadalcanal**  
**August 27-28, 2011**

The sixth and final interview was conducted in the subject's home in Honiara on Guadalcanal. This interview was documented by the two audio recorders and the video camera. Still photographs were also taken during the conversation. Gary F. Quigg acted as primary interviewer, with other team members asking additional questions where subjects prompted additional inquiry, all listed as "Interviewer" in the transcripts. Baoro Laxton Koraua was present as translator, but Joseph is fluent in English and his own spoken word is reproduced in these transcripts as "Respondent." Quigg edited each transcription for clarity, which included some re-grouping of subject matter and the removal of material unassociated with the Nikumaroro Hypothesis. A draft transcription, provided by TIGHAR intern Madeline Corsaro, as well as audio recordings of each complete interview, are available by contacting [www.tighar.org](http://www.tighar.org).

Interviewer: It's August 27, 2011. It's Saturday afternoon about five of two here in Honiara. We're speaking to Joe, and your last name Joe?  
Respondent: Joseph Nemaia.  
Interviewer: How do you spell that?  
Respondent: (Spells name).

Interviewer: You told us you were born on Nikumaroro. When were you born?

Respondent: I was born on the 24th of December 1950.

Interviewer: You stayed on Nikumaroro until when?

Respondent: I stayed there until I was about a year old before we then lived in what they call Manra. That would be Sydney Island, I think.

Interviewer: Did you ever go back to Nikumaroro?

Respondent: No, I never went back there.

Interviewer: How long had your parents been on Nikumaroro when you were born?

Respondent: I think they came in about 1939. They were among the first settlers.

Interviewer: So you yourself would not remember Nikumaroro Island, but you may have been told stories about the island?

Respondent: I was, but I will not really recall as much as I was told because, I mean, being of that age I don't think I would remember anything right.

Interviewer: Did your parents or grandparents ever tell you stories about things that happened on Nikumaroro?

Respondent: No, but there was one particular item that my father left me, and I was just trying to gauge where it was. My parents took it from Nikumaroro to Manra and it was something we call tengabingabi. It's something we put on the ground or on a coconut mat, and put a scraper on it and scrape coconut into it.

Interviewer: It's like a platter?

Respondent: Yeah like a tray...like a very flat tray. No sides to it, but I know that's airplane aluminum.

Interviewer: How do you know that?

Respondent: I've seen a lot of aeroplane aluminums now, and I know. My mom, my mother told me that it was off an aeroplane. That was one particular item, and then I started thinking back, now where the hell is that thing?

Interviewer: No idea, huh?

Respondent: No idea at all. But then, I also remember my uncle Taumarea making a lot of combs. Aluminum combs out of aeroplane metal.

Interviewer: Can you spell for us the word that describes the platter?

Respondent: Tengabingabi, T-E-N-G-A-B-I-N-G-A-B-I.

Interviewer: Would this have been just one flat sheet with no holes or would it have had little holes in it?

Respondent: From what I can gather, one side of it had holes in it. When we left the Phoenix group of islands we also brought it here.

Interviewer: So this piece of aluminum came, as far as you know, from Nikumaroro?

Respondent: Yes. That particular tengabingabi I know was actually from Nikumaroro Island.

Interviewer: How big was it?

Respondent: About a foot and a half.

Interviewer: We've been told by a number of people that there were bones on the island. Did you ever hear about any bones, human bones, being found on Nikumaroro?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: We talked a lot about turtle hunting with the older members of the villages. The people who turtle hunted on Niku told us that they always went to the windward side of the island because that's where the turtles were. While they were there they would sometimes camp there, maybe one or two nights. When they caught the turtles, would they consume any of them there at the turtle camp or would they always take them back to the village?

Respondent: My suspicion would be that they are such a big thing, they would be taken back to the village. If there's only two of you, and you're going to try a whole turtle. One turtle would feed a whole planet, no? Even if we catch them for, what, two or three days before we go back to the village we always take them back to the village.

Interviewer: You take them back. You don't eat them on site.

Respondent: Yeah. They were always given quotas. You can only take one a night. My uncle mentioned you're only allowed one per night. You cannot take two.

Interviewer: This even goes back to the old days? This would go back to the 30s and 40s?

Respondent: Yeah that's because of the preservation, and how they trying to make sure that there's enough supplies. I think that was one thing that the British really instilled into the Phoenix community. Now I know that because my uncle was one of those people who is really willing to just walk the beaches finding if there are any that've come up to lay eggs. In the old days, there used to be egg hunting day three days in the year you can actually go and collect the eggs. Only three days only. The rest of it (if) you are seen hunting for eggs they'll actually put you in jail.

Interviewer: We also know that people were climbing Buka trees on Nikumaroro Island and getting Frigate birds. Would those have been taken back to the village?

Respondent: No, some of that would have been eaten.

Interviewer: Some of it on site?

Respondent: Yes, depending on what you did it for. If you did it for the community you will take it back. But if you did it for, like a picnic thing, and you know, so, wow we'd like to barbecue some birds. Yeah, that's an edible size, so you can actually kill and cook the birds. But, with turtle, even if there's ten of you, there's gonna be a pretty big feast.

Interviewer: Thank you for letting us come in, and for spending time with us.

Respondent: Thank you very much. You're welcome.