

# Thompson Cruise Report.

Commander Warner Thompson was the commanding officer of USCG *Itasca*. This is his Cruise Report, not to be confused with his much longer “Radio Transcripts – Earhart Flight.”



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TREASURY DEPARTMENT

United States Coast Guard

Honolulu, T.H.  
24 July, 1937.

Coast Guard Cutter  
ITASGA

From: Commanding Officer, ITASGA.  
To: Commander, San Francisco Division.  
Subject: Cruise Report 4 June to 24 July, 1937 - embracing  
Earhart flight and Equatorial Island cruise.

1. The following day to day narrative report is submitted:

4 June, 1937:

0900 cast off from berth at San Diego and stood out of harbor proceeding to Los Angeles Outer Harbor where anchored at 1624 - this in conformity with prior instructions and anticipating patrol of the Joint Tri-Island Yacht race scheduled to start from Los Angeles Harbor 5 June, 1937.

5 June, 1937:

Underway at 1332 on various courses following contesting yachts, checking positions and identifying entrants from time to time.

6 June, 1937:

Underway patrolling yacht race and identifying entrants until the last yacht entered had reached the southern end of Catalina Island when stood back over course to insure no casualties and thence to Los Angeles Outer Harbor where anchored at 1805. All yachts checked in and no casualties.

7 June, 1937:

Remained at anchor Los Angeles Harbor throughout the day awaiting the convening of general court on the 9th instant.

8 June, 1937:

Conditions as for 7 June.

9 June, 1937:

General court in the case of Chief Boatswain J. C. Wilson, U.S.C.G., convened at 0945. Robinson, G.W. (217-503) A.S., reported from HERMES for temporary duty.

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9 June, 1937: (cont'd).

0932 Received radio instructions to be prepared on short notice to proceed to Howland Island via Honolulu, T.H., direct from San Pedro.

1400, General court in the case of Chief Boatswain J. C. Wilson, U.S.C.G., completed and court adjourned to await action of convening authority.

1455, underway and stood into berth 60, Los Angeles outer harbor, moored at 1506, and commenced taking fresh water on board.

1520, received orders from San Francisco Division to proceed to Honolulu, T.H., and report to the Commander, Hawaiian Section, for duty in connection with cruise to equatorial islands.

1920, cast off from dock and stood out of harbor and thence to the westward, shaping course for Honolulu, T.H.

10 to 14 June, 1937:

Enroute to Honolulu, T.H.

15 June, 1937:

1155, moored to Pier 27, Honolulu, T.H., and prepared to take fuel. Reported to Commander, Hawaiian Section, and conferred with that officer and Mr. R. B. Black, Representative of the Department of Interior. Covered arrangements for receiving island stores and personnel and equipment for guard duty in connection with Earhart flight.

1445, shifted berth to Pier 12 and commenced loading stores for projected cruise.

16 June, 1937:

Loading stores and equipment preparatory to cruise. Received on board the following temporary personnel from U.S.S ROGER B. TANEY, C.G., and RELIANCE:

RAHNOR, John F. (1080643). C.M.M. (from RELIANCE).  
CIPRIANI, Frank. (206-314). R.M.2c. - WHITE, John I. (110-962). Q.M.3c.  
SCOTT, Charles M. (109-308). Sea.1c. - ANDREWS, Thomas H. (206-416). F.1c.  
BARKES, William J. (201-499). Sea.2c. - POAG, Astor E. (206-458). Sea.2c.  
RANKIN, Martin J. (201-432). Sea.2c.  
FINLEY, Belmont E. (201-492). A.S.  
URBANO, John V. (110-526). M.Att.1c.  
CALDWELL, Kenneth R. (208-279). F.2c.



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17 June, 1937:

Continued loading stores and equipment preparatory to equatorial cruise.  
Received the following personnel in connection with cruise:

A.S.S. David J. Zaugg, U.S.P.H.S.  
Clifford G. Taylor (324-99-82) A.M.M.1c., U.S.N. Technical Assistant.  
Kenneth A. Perry, (341-84-25) A.M.M.2c., U.S.N. Technical Assistant.  
Roy D. Woodall, (267-96-73) Photographer, U.S.N. Technical Assistant.

Mr. P. Fricks, civilian, guest of wardroom.

18 June, 1937:

Received on board the following personnel this date:

Lieutenant Commander F. T. Kenner, U.S.C.G., for temporary duty.  
Mr. Richard B. Black, Representative of Department of Interior for equatorial island cruise and Earhart flight.  
Captain A.M. Neilson, U.S.A., 3rd Engineers, for observation duty.  
1st Lieut. D. A. Cooper, Air Corps, for observation duty.  
Staff Sgt. Anton Hansen, 11th Photo Sec. U.S.A., Technical Assistant.  
Staff Sgt. Joseph Knopping, U.S. Engineers, technical Assistant.  
Staff Sgt. Lloyd W. Thacker, 4th Obs. Sq. USA, for observation duty.  
Sgt. James L. Story, 4th Obs. Sq. for observation duty.

Mr. E. W. Walsh and son Master Geoffrey Walsh, male, age 11 yrs., civilians, guests of wardroom.

Mr. H. N. Hanzlik, United Press correspondent.

Mr. James Carey, Associated Press correspondent.

Following Hawaiian personnel employees of Department of Interior:

Albert K. Akana, Sr.,	-	Jacob Haili,
Carl Kahalewai,	-	Joseph Anakalea,
Theodore Akana,	-	Elmer Williamson,
Solomon Kalama,	-	Paul Yat Lum
Henry Lau.	-	

1600, unmoored pier 12, Honolulu, T.H., and stood to sea, shaping course for Howland Island.

19 to 23 June, 1937:

Enroute to Howland Island. 2056, on the 23rd, raised Howland Island bearing 90 degrees true, distance 7 miles., stopped and drifted to the westward of the island awaiting daybreak.



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24 June, 1937:

0718, closed island, stopped and drifted. Lowered boats and commenced landing stores and equipment together with gasoline and equipment for Earhart flight. Completed landing of stores and equipment at Howland Island this date and drifted during night on the lee side of the island.

25 June, 1937:

Proceeded to Baker Island where hove to at 0847 and commenced landing stores for that island which duty was completed at 1103. The following Department of Interior personnel transferred to Baker Island this date:

Paul Yat Lum; Theodore Akana; Elmer Williamson.

Following Department of Interior personnel received from Baker Island this date:

Albert K. Akana, Jr; Eugene Burke; Gabriel Victor; Ah Kin Leong

26 to 30 June, 1937:

Holding position off and on lee side of Howland Island awaiting arrival of Amelia Earhart plane from Lae, New Guinea. During this period Department of Interior personnel and technical aides at work on runways and precautionary efforts connected with Earhart flight. Organized task groups for landing and take off duties.

1 July, 1937:

1858, received verification from San Francisco Division that Amelia Earhart Putnam had departed Lae, New Guinea at noon, Lae time, and was enroute to Howland.

2 July, 1937:

Made preparation during night for landing task groups in connection with plane flight. Vessel in contact with Earhart plane at 0245 and intermittently thereafter. Early reception poor. At 0610 sent task groups ashore to take stations for landing of plane. 0614 Earhart reported position 200 miles out of Howland. Commenced laying heavy smoke screen at daylight. 0645 Earhart plane reported position 100 miles out. 0742, plane reported apparently over the island and gas running low but no land fall. 0758, plane reported circling and requested transmission on 7500 kcs for bearings. 0800, plane reported reception of our signals but unable to obtain a minimum for bearing.

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2 July, 1937: (cont'd).

0843 Plane reported as being on line 157-337 and running north and south, no reference point given, reception excellent. 0900 Signalled shore party to return to ship as by this time fears were felt that the Earhart plane had probably landed wide of the island. Landing party returned at 0912.

As soon as the plane had indicated that it was still aloft at 0843 and possibly on a line which would provide a land fall it was deemed advisable to retain homing position at Howland with the vessel for sometime on the possibility that the plane might still come in.

At 1040 it was definitely assumed that the plane was down, so got underway at full speed and commenced the search in the area which at that time seemed most logical.

During the last half hour prior to getting underway an estimate of the situation was made based upon the following facts and assumptions:

"FACTS"

(a) Flying conditions within a radius of 40 miles of Howland excellent, wind east 8 to 13 miles, ceiling unlimited, sea smooth.

(b) Visibility south and east of Howland excellent and unlimited as far as could be observed. Sun rising clear and bright and island, ship and smoke screen in the glare thereof.

(c) Visibility north and west of Howland excellent to horizon but beyond that continuous banks of heavy cumulus clouds.

(d) Plane transmissions had indicated flight through cloudy and overcast skies throughout the night and morning.

(e) Plane transmissions had indicated that dead reckoning distance had been accomplished.

(f) Plane signal strength high and unchanged during last hour of transmission.

(g) Plane's line (of position ?) indicated dead reckoning run correct.

(h) Stellar navigating possibilities, south and east of Howland and close to Howland, were excellent throughout the night.



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2 July, 1937: (con'td).

"ASSUMPTIONS"

- (a) That plane obtained no fix during latter part of flight due to visibility and assumed further this due to flying in cloudy weather and conditions which did not exist south and east of Howland but did exist north and west.
- (b) That line of position obtained was a "sun" line obtained when they emerged from the cloudy area north and west of Howland and presumably the only observation made during the latter part of the flight. Further assumed that this line was correct.
- (c) Assume that plane may have missed smoke screen, ship or island visually due to their lying in the glare of the rising sun.
- (d) Assumed further that plane passed within 200 miles of Howland Island and north of it.
- (e) Assumed that plane may have carried line of position found along line of flight for the period necessary for navigator to work and plot line of position not in excess of 100 miles.
- (f) Assume plane did not come down within a radius of 40 miles of Howland.

Upon foregoing facts and assumptions it was decided that the most logical area of search lay in a sector of a circle between 40 miles and 200 miles off of Howland Island and between bearings 337 and 45 true, from that island. Search was accordingly laid down in accordance with this estimate.

The following Department of Interior employees were left on Howland in excess of normal personnel for the purpose of assisting the plane if, by any chance, it neared the Island during the absence of the ITASCA:

Ah Kin Leong; Albert K. Akana Jr; William Tavares;  
Carl Kahalewai and Henry Lau.

Frank Cipriani, Radioman, second class, U.S.C.G., was left ashore in charge of high frequency direction apparatus to obtain bearings, if possible, on the plane. Searching throughout the day to the northward of Howland Island and during the night with searchlights. Extra lookouts posted and all hands on the alert. In addition to the efforts being made by the ITASCA, suggested to Commander, Hawaiian Section, the desirability of a Navy sea plane search from Pearl Harbor. Received information from the San Francisco Division, that there was a possibility that the plane might use radio on the water and further that possibility of floating a considerable time excellent together with an emergency rubber boat and plenty of emergency rations carried.



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2 July, 1937: (cont'd).

At 2145 received definite instructions from Commandant, 14th Naval District, to be at Howland Island at daybreak Saturday, 3 July, to provide tender service for plane which had left Pearl Harbor at 1923. In view of the fact that the plane was already in the air enroute to Howland Island there was no alternative other than to abandon the search temporarily for the Earhart plane and proceed as indicated in the above noted orders; course was accordingly changed for Howland Island. Search was still maintained with searchlights.

3 July, 1937:

Arrived off Howland at 0710 in accordance with instructions. 0719, received information that Navy plane was turning back to base on account of extremely bad flying weather so resumed search to the northward which continued throughout the day. Received information from San Francisco Division that four (4) separate radio stations at Los Angeles reported receiving Earhart position 179 with 1.6 in doubt. In view of possibilities of the plane being able to transmit on the water as indicated in prior information stood west to this latest reported position for the purpose of proving or disproving the reports which could not consistently be ignored. Maintained search throughout the day.

4 July, 1937:

Took up search during the 4th from 180th meridian towards Howland Island using a rectangular search method and continued throughout the day and night.

5 July, 1937:

At 0242 received information from Hawaiian Section that Naval Radio Station Wailupe had intercepted the following message; "281 NORTH HOWLAND CALL KHAQQ BEYOND NORTH DONT HOLD WITH US MUCH LONGER ABOVE WATER SHUT OFF". With the possibility of plane transmission on the water still existing stood north towards the position indicated in the foregoing intercept and advised all steamers in the vicinity of the possibility of the plane being down at that point. Contacted Howland Island in an endeavor to obtain a bearing from that point on the reported plane and report from Howland gave a bearing which conformed to the report. Searched to the northward enroute to reported position of plane. Arrived about dusk broadcasting on plane frequencies and using search lights intermittently for visual signals. At 2100 lights which had the appearance of flares were sighted to the northward and stood up to investigate. These reported lights had every indication of a bursting green rocket but were finally determined to be attributed to meteorological shower which was reported both by the Howland Island Station and U.S.S SWAN. At 2315 identified English steamer MOORSEY who had diverted from her normal course to assist in the search. Continued search throughout the night.



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6 July, 1937:

Proceeded south and east during the night to effect rendezvous with U.S.S COLORADO on the morning of the 7th for fuel purposes. At 1445 received instructions to report for duty to the Commandant, 14th Naval District, and reported as indicated. At 1545 received instructions from Commandant, 14th Naval District to report to U.S.S COLORADO for duty and conformed.

7 July, 1937:

Contacted U.S.S COLORADO at 0445. Closed her at 0638 and at 0703 commenced taking fuel by destroyer method. Received from COLORADO commissary stores as requested. While fueling Commanding Officer conferred with Commanding Officer COLORADO relative to search program and the general situation up to-date. 1010 completed fueling from the COLORADO, cast off and stood southward and westward for search area outlined in conference.

8 to 10 July, 1937:

Searched area south and west of Baker Island in accordance with orders of Commanding Officer, U.S.S COLORADO.

11 July, 1937.

0945 COMDESSQDRN 2 in charge of search. Continued search as indicated in original orders. 2224 received instructions from ComDesSqrn 2 to proceed to ARORAI (Hurd) Island in the Gilbert Group and shaping course accordingly.

12 July, 1937:

Proceeding toward ARORAI Island, lower Gilberts, to investigate that Island and others as indicated in orders.

13 July, 1937:

Raised ARORAI Island at 0600 and stood off shore to await further instructions from Naval Command. Received final instructions to visit certain islands of the Gilbert group at 0700 and stood for ARORAI. 0835 Stepped off ARORAI Island, native canoe came alongside with native Magistrate who came on board and conferred with Commanding Officer. 0850 Landed two commissioned officers via native canoe with the permission and assistance of native Magistrate for the purpose of interrogating local inhabitants relative to the passage or wreckage of the Earhart plane. 1050 Officers returned with negative reports on their efforts. 1402, underway proceeding to TAMANA Island (Rotcher). 1513 Hove to off TAMANA Island. 1530 native canoe with native Magistrate came on board and departed with commissioned officers to interrogate local natives. 1714, duty officers returned with negative information. 1730, underway and stood to the northward and westward along the Gilbert chain.



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14 July, 1937:

1322, stood in close to lee side NAUUKI (Henderville) Island but held no communication as no native boats came out and the surf breaking too heavily for surf boats unfamiliar with the locality. 1425, Underway from NAUUKI Island to intercept two native canoes sighted. 1452, stopped alongside of native canoe but were unable to obtain information due to their inability to speak English. 1510, set course for KURIA (Woodie) Island where arrived at 1610 under the reef and drifted. Lowered surfboat and contacted native Magistrate who stated that the islands of this group were in close communication and that no information was available concerning any plane or wreckage. 1710, underway to the northward and westward, instructions having been modified regarding particular islands to search and the reporting of this vessel at TARAWA (Cook) Island, the Division Headquarters, being deemed essential.

15 July, 1937:

0650, Raised TARAWA Island and stood in to westward of reef. 0850, stopped and drifted off channel entrance. Dispatched Lieutenant Commander L. H. Baker and representative officers ashore in motor launch and motor surfboat to report the arrival of the ITASCA in the Gilberts officially and to explain the vessel's mission. At 1430 motor boats returned with following information; the Senior Commissioner received the party graciously but declined to receive the visit as official owing to the fact that he had received no prior notice of the vessel's arrival in the Gilbert group. He requested the ITASCA to notify the Resident Commissioner at Ocean Island which latter report was accomplished by ComDesSqrn 2. The Resident Commissioner at TARAWA Island stated that contact between the northern islands was close and that no information had been received of the passage of the Earhart plane or any wreckage therefrom. He further stated that a definite lookout had been kept for the plane at his instructions since the flight. 1455, with all boats secured, set course toward the southward at standard speed. Advised ComDesSqrn 2 fully as regards the situation to-date and was directed to proceed to Howland Island for the purpose of picking up personnel and stores enroute to Honolulu.

16 July, 1937:

Enroute to Howland Island from the Gilberts. 1505, released from duty in search area by ComDesSqrn 2 and reported to Commandant, 14th Naval District. 1725, relieved from further search duty by Commandant, 14th Naval District, and reported to Commander, Hawaiian Section. 1740, received orders to proceed to Honolulu, T.H.

17 July, 1937:

Enroute to Howland Island.



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18 July, 1937:

0453 Sighted Howland Island. Reduced speed and at 0642 stopped and drifted on the lee side of the island. At 0800 commenced loading gasoline oil and other materials connected with the Earhart flight and spare gas and water drums left on the island at prior dates. The following Department of Interior personnel transferred to Howland Island this date; Joseph Anakelea; Jacob Haili. The following Department of Interior personnel reported on board; James Kamakaiwi; William Tavarries; Ah Kin Leong; Albert K. Akana, Jr.; Carl Kahalewai; and Henry Lau.

CIPRIANI, Frank (206-314) R.M.2e., U.S.C.G., returned from temporary duty on Howland Island. 1100 All stores and personnel on board and secured. 1120, underway on course for Honolulu, T. H.

19-23 July, 1937:

Enroute to Honolulu, T. H.

24 July, 1937:

Arrived Honolulu, T.H., at 1110 and moored at Pier No. 27. Reported arrival to Commander, Hawaiian Section. Following personnel left vessel:

Lieutenant Commander, Frank T. Kenner, USCG.  
Captain A. M. Neilson, U.S.A., 3rd Engineers.  
1st Lieut. D. A. Cooper, Air Corps, U.S.A.  
Staff Sgt. Anton Hansen, 11th Photo Sec. U.S.A.  
1st Sgt. Joseph Knopping, 3rd Engineers, U.S.A.  
Staff Sgt. Lloyd W. Thacker, 4th Obs. Sq. U.S.A.  
Sgt. James L. Story, 4th Obs Sq. U.S.A.  
Clifford G. Taylor (324-99-82) A.M.M.ls., U.S.N.  
Kenneth A. Parry (341-84-25) A.M.M.ls., U.S.N.  
Roy D. Woodall, (267-96-73) Photographer, U.S.N.  
Mr. E. W. Walsh and son Master Geoffrey Walsh, male, age 11 yrs., civilians, guests of wardroom.  
Mr. H. N. Hanslik, United Press correspondent.  
Mr. James Carey, Associated Press correspondent.  
Richard B. Black, Department of Interior, and Dept. of Interior employees as follows: Mr. Albert K. Akana; Joe Anakalea; Carl Kahalewai, James Kamakaiwi; Bill Tavares; Albert Akana, Eugene Burke; Gabriel Victor; Ah Kin Leong; Solomon Kalama, Henry Lau; and Jacob Haili.

*East coast*

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2. Track charts of the search are inclosed herewith.

SUMMARY

Miles Cruised, . . . . .	10,229.6
Days Underway, . . . . .	45
Days at Anchor, . . . . .	8
Hours Underway, . . . . .	1,024
Hours Anchored, . . . . .	187
Vessels Boarded, . . . . .	NONE
Vessels Assisted, . . . . .	NONE
Vessels Trailed, . . . . .	NONE
Regattas Patrolled, . . . . .	1

/s/ W. K. THOMPSON.

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601 First Indorsement. San Francisco, Calif.,  
SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION. 6 August, 1937.

From: Commander, San Francisco Division.  
To : Commandant.

1. Forwarded in triplicate for the information of Headquarters.  
By direction,

/s/ F. K. JOHNSON.