

TIGHAR TRACKS

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP FOR HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RECOVERY

This never-before-published photograph was taken by a youth named Dustin Carter at Burbank Airport on the morning of May 21, 1937. It shows Amelia Earhart's Electra being loaded for the unpublicised departure of her second world flight attempt. AE stands near the tail in conference with an unidentified person while Fred Noonan unloads gear from the trunk of his wife's convertible. Mary Bea Noonan watches from beside the front fender. She will never see her husband again.

DEPARTURE

Whatever drama occurs during the expedition that is departing as this *TIGHAR Tracks* goes to press, it will be hard-pressed to match the cliffhanger of the final fund-raising.

Friday night, September 13 (Departure minus 14)

Fax arrives from Oceaneering International. They will start mobilizing their personnel and equipment on Wednesday the 18th. TIGHAR's contract calls for payment in full 48 hours before mobilization. Please wire \$146,970 Monday morning. We're still about \$200,000 short of the expedition's total budget. There's no way we can meet that payment.

Monday morning, September 16 (departure minus 11)

Call to Oceaneering. We don't have the money. Can you do the job on spec?

Monday night, September 16 (departure minus 10.5)

Call from Oceaneering. Disaster. The boss says no. No money, no sonar, no ROV, no chance to find the airplane.

Tuesday, September 17 (departure minus 10)

Defiance. We'll go anyway and do just the onshore search. Do our best with what we have. Some counsel postponement. That would be death to TIGHAR's credibility. We go as scheduled if we have to swim to Nikumaroro.

Wednesday, September 18 (departure minus 9)

Grim determination. We're not going to give up without a fight. Call to Oceaneering. How long will you hold everything ready to go? One week, until Wednesday the 25th. Okay, we've got one week to raise \$200,000.

Monday, September 23 (departure minus 3)

Desperation. Despite burning up the phone and fax lines and singlehandedly supporting Federal Express, we've only been able to scare up a few more thousand from the faithful. Those who have the capability to do more won't.

Tuesday morning, September 24 (departure minus 2)

Oceaneering calls. They're under pressure to release our equipment for other jobs. Tomorrow is definitely the last day. *Hoping against hope.*



From an original negative in the Carter/Johnson collection acquired by TIGHAR courtesy of John T. Johnson (TIGHAR #0939C).

Tuesday afternoon, September 24 (departure minus 1.75)

An old friend has gone to his friends. He and they will lend TIGHAR the money knowing full well that this is not what you'd call a secure loan. That kind of faith is really humbling. That kind of debt is terrifying. But The Earhart Project is fully funded.

Wednesday, September 25 (departure minus 1)

Jubilation. The biggest check (and the biggest obligation) in TIGHAR's history arrives by FedEx. Oceaneering is paid and mobilized. Trucks will roll, airplanes will fly, and the ship will sail – all as planned.

While all of this was going on there were a hundred other crises, minor only by comparison, which had to be resolved. Only a heroic effort by White's Electronics of Sweet Home, Oregon overcame technical difficulties to specially modify ten PI3000 metal detectors in time for the expedition. Robbins Engineering Instruments of Gloucester, New Jersey went to great lengths to equip the expedition with hi-tech surveying gear and to train us in its use. Pacific Stihl of Chico, California arranged for the donation of power equipment for use on the island and United Airlines efficiently handled the complex travel arrangements.

The expedition sails from Honolulu on September 30 and is scheduled to return October 30. No press announcements will be made during the expedition or afterward until we've had time to analyze the results. At present we anticipate holding a press conference on November 15. It is very important that TIGHAR members continue to support the project while the expedition is in progress. TIGHAR headquarters will remain open and staffed during the entire month of October (see "While We Are Out," page 5). TIGHAR has gone into significant debt to complete the funding for this expedition but, as Amelia said, "The future is mortgaged, but what are futures for?"

