

Sixty Years Is Long Enough To Wait

As logistical preparations and fund-raising for TIGHAR's September 1996 expedition to Nikumaroro continue, new research results bolster our hopes for success. Over the seven years of the Earhart Project investigation we have been (and continue to be) astonished at the wealth of new, original-source information TIGHAR members bring to light. We've also been amazed at how many of the supposedly-established facts about history's most famous missing flight are simply not true. What does not, therefore, surprise us is that the fate of Earhart and Noonan has remained a mystery for all these years. July 2, 1997 will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Earhart disappearance. We think that's long enough for anybody to stay lost.

This issue of *TIGHAR Tracks* details some recently-discovered examples of the kind of erroneous assumptions which have derailed Earhart researchers for over half a century (see "Things Not Said," page 18). We also have some new perspectives on old photographic imagery which may contain important evidence (see "A View To The Sea," page 20).

And the research continues. Recently retired FAA explosives expert Walter Korsgaard, whose successful investigations include the Pan Am 103 bombing, has determined that the type of damage sustained by the section of aircraft skin recovered on Nikumaroro in 1991 (TIGHAR Artifact 2-2-V-1) is not consistent with the detonation of an explosive device (i.e. World War II ordnance) but was

more likely caused by a fuel/air explosion (as we have suspected).

Dr. Randy Jacobson's (TIGHAR #1364) analysis of Fred Noonan's notations on the original charts used during NR16020's crossing of the South Atlantic (sent home and now part of the Purdue University collection) leads us to conclude that yet another famous

Amelia anecdote is apocryphal. In her book *Last Flight* (heavily edited and published posthumously) Earhart describes rejecting, to her subsequent regret, Noonan's navigational advice upon reaching the coast of Africa. The charts tell a different and fascinating story which we'll relate in a future *TIGHAR Tracks*.

As we go to press, a TIGHAR expedition led by Professor Dirk Ballendorf (TIGHAR #0838) of the University of Guam Micronesia Area Research Center has just arrived

on Vaghena in the Solomon Islands. When the British colony on Nikumaroro was abandoned in 1963, its Gilbertese population was resettled on this hard-to-get-to island in the southwest Pacific. Dirk's mission is to find any surviving veterans of the early days on Nikumaroro and record their recollections. He'll also be keeping a sharp eye out for any interesting artifacts they may have brought with them.

With funds raised and pledged approaching 50% of the project's budget, your continued support is more important than ever to assure that the momentum is maintained, the work continues, and the answers keep coming.

