At this time, all we can say with certainty is that there was, for several years, an opening in Nikumaroro’s beachfront vegetation which exhibited features characteristic of human activity and that this was present well before any documented settlement of the island. Without a photo pre-dating July 1937 it is impossible to know whether the opening was there prior to Earhart’s disappearance. However, if these are the “signs of recent habitation” reported by Colorado’s Senior Aviator; if one of the objects visible in the 1941 photo is the “water collection device” seen in 1944 by Coast Guardsman Richard Evans; if somewhere back in the bush is the aircraft which PBY pilot John Mims was told about in 1945; if the aircraft parts TIGHAR found in the abandoned village in 1989 and 1991 came from here; then the implications of these photographs with respect to the amount of time Earhart and Noonan may have survived on the island are staggering.

Stand By

Originally scheduled for this issue of TIGHAR Tracks, the concluding installment of our series on the Earhart Electra is waiting on further research. Parts One (TIGHAR Tracks Vol. 11 No. 2) and Two (TIGHAR Tracks Vol. 11 No. 3) traced the many changes in the external appearance of Lockheed 10E Special c/n 1055 from its delivery in July of 1936 to its disappearance a year later. Part Three will document the evolution of the airplane’s internal fuel and communications systems and that (surprise, surprise) is proving to be very difficult indeed. So far, we have most of the fuel system documented through Bureau of Air Commerce inspection reports, a few photographs and a blueprint schematic found in the Purdue University Archive Special Collection. The communications gear is proving much tougher to pin down, in part because of the many post-loss proclamations by various parties as to what radios and accessories were and were not aboard for the final flight. We’re getting there, but it’s taking longer than we thought it would. We’ll publish Part Three as soon as we’re sure we’ve got it right.