

# The Amelia Earhart Library and Film Festival

Finding Amelia

Listed below are the Earhart-related books and films we know about. Let us know if there are any we've missed. A brief review is provided for those with which we are familiar. Not included in this list are the many books intended for children.

## Earhart, Amelia

1929 *20 Hrs. 40 Min.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

AE's account of the Friendship flight. The title refers to the duration of that flight.

## Earhart, Amelia

1932 *The Fun of It.* New York: Brewer, Warren & Putnam.

AE's autobiography (as of her solo Atlantic crossing) and paean to other contemporary female flyers. The title explains why she flies.

## Earhart, Amelia

1937 *Last Flight.* New York: Harcourt Brace and Company.

Originally to be titled *World Flight*, this account of Earhart's second and fatal attempt to circle the globe was posthumously assembled, and creatively edited, from notes she had sent home during the trip. Interesting reading, but don't take it all as fact.

## Garst, Doris Shannon

1950 *Amelia Earhart: Heroine of the Skies.* New York: Messner.

## Howe, James Moore

1950 *Amelia Earhart: Kansas Girl.* New York: Bobbs Merrill.

## De Leeuw, Adele Louise

1955 *Story of Amelia Earhart.* New York: Grosset & Dunlap.

## Briand, Paul L., Jr.

1960 *Daughter of the Sky.* New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce.

The very first of the conspiracy books—Amelia flies to Saipan by mistake (a course error of 90°) and is captured by the Japanese.

## Morrissey, Muriel Earhart

1963 *Courage is the Price.* Wichita, Kansas: McCormick-Armstrong.

Mrs. Morrissey's account of her sister's life and career.

## Goerner, Fred

1966 *The Search for Amelia Earhart.* New York: Doubleday & Co.

A best seller and the most influential of the Earhart books to date. AE was a spy who was captured in the Marshall Islands, imprisoned on Saipan, and died at the hands of the Japanese. Well written. A conspiracy classic.

## Dwiggins, Don

1967 *Hollywood Pilot.* New York: Doubleday.

A biography of Paul Mantz with a substantial section devoted to his association with Earhart as her technical advisor. His comment, "She wouldn't listen to Papa" speaks volumes about both Mantz and Earhart.

## Burke, John

1970 *Winged Legend—The Story of Amelia Earhart.* London: Arthur Barker.

## Klaas, Joe

1970 *Amelia Earhart Lives.* New York: McGraw Hill Book Company.

Pulled from bookstores by the publisher following a lawsuit by the woman Klaas (and sidekick Joe Gervais) said was Amelia Earhart. Best read as fiction if you can find a copy of it.

## Pellegrino, Ann Holtgren

1971 *World Flight: The Earhart Trail.* Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press.

On the 30th anniversary of Earhart's final flight, the first of many Amelia-wannabes makes it all the way 'round in a Lockheed Electra.

- Davidson, Joe
- 1972 *Amelia Earhart Returns from Saipan.* Canton, Ohio: Davidson Publishing Company.
- When the name of the author and the publisher match—it's a bad sign.
- Davis, Burke
- 1972 *Amelia Earhart.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Strippel, Dick
- 1972 *Amelia Earhart: The Myth and the Reality.* Jericho, New York: Exposition Press.
- An early, although not very successful, attempt to establish the facts. This backlash against the conspiracy theories has the flight crash at sea.
- Carrington, George
- 1977 *Amelia Earhart, A Report.* Vancouver, B.C.: Britnav Services.
- Earhart was a spy, flying to Howland and then over Truk and Kwajalein before ditching and being taken in custody by the Japanese who took her to Saipan. Amazing.
- Tanous, Peter
- 1978 *The Earhart Mission.* New York: Simon and Schuster. (novel)
- Thayer, James Stewart
- 1980 *The Earhart Betrayal.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. (novel)
- Backus, Jean L.
- 1982 *Letters From Amelia.* Boston: Bacon Press.
- A collection of AE's letters to family, friends and business associates. Provides some fascinating insight into a complex personality.
- Knaggs, Oliver
- 1983 *Amelia Earhart: Her Last Flight.* Cape Town, South Africa: Timmins Publishers.
- Eyewitnesses around the Pacific clearly remember the lady flyer who was captured by the Japanese.
- Loomis, Vincent, with Jeffrey Ethell
- 1985 *Amelia Earhart, The Final Story.* New York: Random House.
- Earhart was not a spy, but was mistaken for one when she crashed at Mili Atoll in the Marshalls. Many documents reproduced in appendices, most of which contradict the thesis of the book.
- Chadwick, Roxane
- 1987 *Amelia Earhart—Aviation Pioneer.* Minneapolis: Lerner.
- Devine, Thomas E., with Richard M. Daley
- 1987 *Eyewitness: The Amelia Earhart Incident.* Frederick, Colorado: Renaissance House.
- The U.S. Marines burned Earhart's airplane on Saipan, and Mr. Devine knows it because he saw them do it.
- Donahue, J. A.
- 1987 *The Earhart Disappearance—The British Connection.* Terre Haute, Indiana: SunShine House, Inc.
- Spies and spies and more spies, spies everywhere you look. The most elaborate plot yet, involving (apparently) everyone within 2,000 miles of Earhart's route.
- Morrissey, Muriel Earhart, with Carol Osborne
- 1987 *Amelia, My Courageous Sister.* Santa Clara, California: Osborne Publisher.
- Basically a re-issue of Courage is the Price with many original documents reproduced.
- Brennan, T. C. "Buddy"
- 1988 *Witness to the Execution: The Odyssey of Amelia Earhart.* Frederick, Colorado: Renaissance House.
- More spies. Backhoe archaeology on Saipan unearths the actual blindfold ripped from Amelia's eyes before she was executed. (We usually leave the blindfold on.) A video is available complete with witness interviews.
- Lovell, Mary S.
- 1989 *The Sound of Wings.* New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Close—but no cigar. The best of the biographies to date. Generally well researched and extensively footnoted, Lovell does fine until she tries to deal with the disappearance. Her support of the crashed-and-sank theory is based upon opinion presented as fact and facts that are not true.
- Rich, Doris L.
- 1989 *Amelia Earhart, A Biography.* Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- An endorsement by the Smithsonian doesn't excuse rumor and speculation presented as truth. Poorly footnoted and often just plain wrong.
- Keyzer-Andre, Henri
- 1993 *Age of Heroes.* Mamaroneck, New York: Hastings House.
- The nonsensical autobiography of a self-aggrandizing character who claims to have seen Japanese documents proving that the Zero was based upon Amelia's captured Electra.

Brink, Randall

1994 *Lost Star*. New York: W.W. Norton Co.

Perhaps the most disingenuous of the conspiracy books. Shopworn and thoroughly discredited speculation presented as new evidence.

Wilson, Donald Moyer

1994 *Amelia Earhart: Lost Legend*. Webster, New York: Enigma Press.

A festival of folklore. They're all here, the eyewitnesses who saw the lady flyer captured, imprisoned, or executed by the Japanese and the American veterans who found AE's suitcase, briefcase, diary, etc.

Roessler, Walter & Leo Ganz

1995 *Amelia Earhart—Case Closed?*

Hummelstown, Pennsylvania: Aviation Publishers.

Never put a question mark in a book's title. Crashed-and-sank speculation based upon bad information and unwarranted assumption.

Mendelsohn, Jane

1996 *I Was Amelia Earhart*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. (novel)

See review next page.

Anderson, Alison

1996 *Hidden Latitudes*. New York: Scribner (novel)

See review next page.

## Film Reviews by Russ Matthews, TIGHAR #0509CE

**Flight for Freedom.** Feature film, 1943. The story of how famous American aviatrix, Tonie Carter (a transparently fictionalized Earhart), gallantly gave her life to aid U.S. war preparations. It is almost certainly the root of countless Amelia sightings throughout the Pacific Theater. The film is best viewed now as a clever piece of war propaganda and for its revelation that everyone of Japanese descent is a spy.



**Amelia Earhart.** Made for TV, 1976. A comprehensive two-part miniseries comprised mainly of vignettes from the life of St. Amelia. The film shows notable restraint in dramatizing the disappearance with an Itasca-centric point of view, yet throws in an (unconsummated) affair with Paul Mantz.



**Amelia Earhart: The Final Flight.** Made for cable TV, 1994. The filmmakers actually remained faithful to their source material here—which, unfortunately, turns out to be Doris Rich's error-strewn *Amelia Earhart: A Biography*. The choice of ample, blonde Dutchman Rutger Hauer to play the role of lanky, dark-haired Irishman Fred Noonan serves as a fitting example of why *Final Flight* is the most casting-challenged production of them all.



**Untold Stories: The Search for Amelia Earhart.** 1992. Television documentary, NBC News Productions. Hosted by Lindsay Wagner and Boyd Matson. Well, what can we say? A

combination of Earhart biography and the 1991 TIGHAR expedition. It could have been worse.



**Amelia Earhart: The Price of Courage.**

Television documentary, 1993. aired on PBS as part of "The American Experience." Narrated by Kathy Bates. Hatchet job on GP, with episodes from Amelia's life made up out of whole cloth. Who says if it's on PBS it has to be good?



In addition to these monuments to the art of film, a variety of TV shows have featured episodes on Amelia through the decades:

**"In Search of...Amelia Earhart."** Episode of television series "In Search of..." Hosted by Leonard Nimoy. 1970s.

**"Unsolved Mysteries"** segment, hosted by Robert Stack. 1980s.

**"Biography"** Episode, narrated by Mike Wallace. 1960s.

**"Secrets and Mysteries: Amelia Earhart"** episode, hosted by Edward Mulhare. 1990s.

**"American Women of Achievement,"** short film for school use. 1990s.

**"The '37-ers,"** Star Trek: Voyager episode, starring Sharon Lawerence as Amelia Earhart. 1995.

**"Amelia Earhart."** A&E Biography episode, 1996.

# NO YOU WEREN'T

# Hidden Platitudes

**I Was Amelia Earhart** by Jane Mendelsohn. Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. 146 pp., \$18.00 (hardcover). Reviewed by Phil Scott.

Poor Amelia Earhart. Ever since she disappeared, her soul has had to endure the torment of a rash of nonfiction works proposing to solve the mystery once and for all. And now this overheated, overbearing, over-praised novel joins them. Author Jane Mendelsohn's Earhart is dark, brooding, and afflicted with a death wish; then, when she and navigator Fred Noonan crash-land on a desert island, the situation deteriorates into a cross between Gilligan's Island and a middleaged Blue Lagoon. Personally, I was hoping more for Lord of the Flies.

This book has it all, even a convincing argument against reincarnation. There is foreshadowing troweled on thicker than adobe, though only the densest reader wouldn't have a clue about Earhart's fate. There is also a pretentious, phony-profound solemnity reminiscent of a sophomore fiction writing class, plus reams of torrid prose: "I watch the sky as it curves and swells ... voluptuous, sultry in the naked heat, it seems to me to be the flesh of a woman." Gee, why hasn't it ever been like that for me?

As mercifully short as it is, by page 20 I had the distinct impression that the book was already too long. And lest I lose myself in a diatribe on the prose alone, there are some interesting technical errors that made me chuckle when I suppose I should have been breaking into a cold sweat. With a heroic abandon last displayed by Walter Mitty, Mendelsohn has a lost and thirsty Amelia tapping a "dial" and crashing a trainer when the "engine" stalls. A real pilot might call those complicated-looking thingies "instruments," and would probably know that it's the airplane's wing that stalls, not its engine (of which a Lockheed Electra always has two). If you really are Amelia Earhart, Mendelsohn, it's no wonder you got lost.

—Phil Scott's most recent book is *The Shoulders of Giants, A History of Human Flight from 1919*. This review originally appeared in the August/September issue of Air & Space Smithsonian. Thanks for letting us run it here, Phil.

Special thanks to David Clark for the cartoon at right. All rights reserved, used by permission.

**Hidden Latitudes** by Alison Anderson. Scribner, 1996. 221 pp., \$21.00 (hardcover). Reviewed by Pat Thrasher.

Published back-to-back with *I Was Amelia Earhart*, a comparison between these two books is inevitable, however odious. *Hidden Latitudes* has some distinct advantages over *IWAE*. For instance, it has a plot. And the author carefully steers clear of any subject which requires even a smattering of aviation knowledge. Also, it is written in plain English rather than Sophomore Artsy. Mostly.

It does feature the apparently obligatory affair between Fred and AE on the remote desert island, with the additional fillip of a baby (lost, of course, to premature birth/miscarriage). Ah, but is it really Fred and AE? We are not to know for sure (this is the High Art part): "My own tale does not in any way attempt to establish or suggest what happened to Earhart and Noonan—if indeed the woman on the island is Earhart. That I leave up to the reader to decide." Well, given that the woman tells of flying her Electra across the Pacific, and places herself last in civilization sometime before World War II, and has a male navigator who drinks (!), and is on an island in Kiribati—oh, forget it.

The most interesting thing about *Hidden Latitudes* is the jacket photo. While fancied up with art effects, it is still clearly a photo of Nikumaroro. In fact, there is a slide in TIGHAR's collection which matches it. I know. I took the photo.

