

TIGHAR Tracks



A Publication of The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery
TIGHAR · 2812 Fawkes Drive · Wilmington, DE 19808 · USA · www.tighar.org



By Ron Bright, TIGHAR #2342

For several years now, TIGHAR researchers and subscribers to our online Amelia Earhart Search Forum have been signing their correspondence with the somewhat enigmatic closing “Love to Mother,” often abbreviated to “LTM.” First used in that context by Expedition Team member Russ Matthews (TIGHAR #0509CE), the phrase is taken from a document which has become a cornerstone of allegations that Earhart was alive and in Japanese custody at the end of World War II. At TIGHAR, the phrase has become popular as an irreverent reminder to be rigorous in our research and reasonable in drawing our conclusions.

Recently, as an independent research project, TIGHAR members Ron Bright (#2342) and Laurie McLaughlin (#2212), with assistance from oft-published Earhart researcher Rollin Reineck, set out to discover the true author of the Love to Mother message. Ron’s report, edited and reproduced below, summarizes an excellent piece of detective work.

Background

*After Amelia Earhart disappeared on 2 July 37 enroute to Howland Island, an immediate Navy search disclosed not a single trace of Earhart or the Electra. In 1943, the fictional Hollywood film *Flight For Freedom* popularized the idea that Earhart’s flight may have been somehow associated with prewar U.S. intelligence gathering efforts.*

One historical document which has often been offered as evidence that Earhart was held captive by the Japanese is a Radiogram message dated 21 August 45 from Weihsein Internment Camp, China, sent via the US State Department to George Putnam at N. Hollywood, Ca.

The text of the message read:

Camp liberated; all well. Volumes to tell. Love to mother.

It was transmitted as “unsigned.”

Putnam replied to the State Department on 9 September 1937 with a terse letter asking that any further telegrams be forwarded to his home at Lone Pine, California. Neither the government, Putnam, nor anyone else initiated an investigation of Earhart’s possible presence at Weihsein. Putnam apparently did not mention the communication to Amelia’s mother Amy or her sister Muriel Morrissey. The message was never made public.

Then in 1971, author and long time Earhart researcher Fred Goerner learned about the message and in 1975 received a copy from the National Archives. Goerner didn't publicize this discovery, although he exchanged letters with other researchers. Goerner, despite his personal conviction that the Japanese had captured Earhart, dismissed the document as a message to Putnam from someone at Weihsein who knew him before the war. He didn't believe it was from Earhart.

On 28 June 1987, the LA Times published an article claiming that a State Department employee had found an "unpublished" government telegram in the "Earhart" file at the National Archives. It was the Love to Mother message.

The clear implication was that Amelia Earhart had been a prisoner at Weihsein Civilian Assembly Camp. Some researchers took this to be compelling evidence that the Japanese had indeed captured Earhart and that she had been held since 1937 by the Japanese government. After the Camp's liberation in 1945, so the specu-

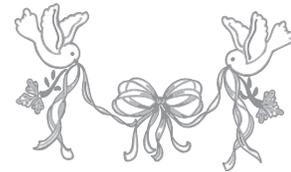
lation went, Amelia was returned to the US and evaded all publicity.

Adding support to the idea that the message was from Earhart, Lt. James Hannon, one of the OSS paratroopers who liberated the camp on 15 August 45, told researchers that the message confirmed in his mind some of the strange events at Weihsein. He described a comatose, incoherent female "Yank" whom he believed must have been Earhart because of the special treatment she was accorded. In September 1945, according to Hannon, she was spirited away by a Japanese "Betty" bomber.

Interviews with other OSS troops, camp administrators, internees, and camp documents, failed to confirm or conclusively deny the supposition that Earhart was at Weihsein. Most researchers agreed with Goerner and believed it was an associate or friend of Putnam that wrote the message pointing out that Putnam apparently did not ask for additional investigation. But then, who did write the Love to Mother message? If we could discover the author and it wasn't Amelia, that would close the speculation on Earhart's presence at Weihsein.



The Investigation



We began with three assumptions:

- 1) The author knew the 1935-41 address of Putnam at 10042 Valley Spring Lane, N. Hollywood, California,
- 2) The author knew Putnam well enough to send the message with some kind of reason and
- 3) The author was conveying a code or intimate purpose with the "love to mother" closing.

The research steps I followed were:

1. I examined a list of all 1400 plus internees on a June 1944 roster for any clues regarding, age, business, occupations, and nationalities (American) but none seemed to suggest a link a professional or business link with Putnam.
2. I examined the Radiogram from the State Department., transmitted from Chungking to the US State Department via Navy radio, with the 135 messages. They were mostly addressed to relatives, business partners, schools, and all limited to about 10 words.
3. Only two messages were designated with a (*) meaning signature omitted – Putnam's and the very next message. This suggested a possible transmission problem. Rollin Reineck wondered if a limit of "one message per internee" prompted Kamal to add the second message to Putnam, deliberately leaving off the signature in order to get the message out.

4. Examining the text of each disclosed that only two messages out of the 135 were strikingly similar in the phrasing of "camp liberated." Those messages belonged to an "A. Kamal" and to GP Putnam.

Putnam's: "Camp liberated; all well. Volumes to tell. Love to Mother. (sig. omitted)"

Kamal's: "Advise mother all safe concentration camp liberated books ready, Kamal."

5. Kamal's message was addressed to Maxwell Perkins at Scribner and Sons, a publishing house.
6. None of the other messages used the "camp liberated" phrase, and the "advise mother" phrase. I felt that Kamal could be a possibility as he was a self-proclaimed author and might be writing publishing house in competition with Putnam's. Maybe he was writing to Putnam too about a forthcoming book.
7. The camp roster listed A. Kamal as a 30 year old "student" and a Mrs. A.T. Kamal, housewife.

We then contacted numerous former Internees and learned that Kamal was "Ahmad Kamal" a supposed expert in Central Asia matters, authority on Mongolian and Chinese Turkestan, a guide on the Roy Chapman Andrews expedition in the Gobi desert, and an "author."

Former internee Pamela Masters, who wrote *The Mushroom Years*, a story of the Weihsein experience,

recalled that Kamal from Weihsein accidentally ran into her sister in LA in 1947 trying to sell a story – something about “Six Fathoms Deep;” he was attempting to break into the Hollywood scene. She described him as a “flaming red headed” Turk.

We reviewed publishing companies and found that an “Ahmad Kamal” had written seven books, including *The Seven Questions of Timur* published in 1938 and *Land without Laughter*, published in 1940. These books described his adventures in Central Asia, getting charged as a spy by the Russians, and escaping with a Chinese general to Peking.

These descriptions of the book led us to believe that the Ahmad Kamal at Weihsein was the same Kamal as the author. If he was an author it was possible that he had some connection with George Putnam pre-war, but we couldn’t find any direct link.

A fellow TIGHAR researcher, Andrew McKenna (TIGHAR #1045CE), found that AE and George Putnam had a social relationship with Andrews of the Gobi expedition in the mid- to late 30s.

Thus, we speculated, if Kamal at Weihsein was the author Kamal, it could be a common link between Kamal and Putnam.

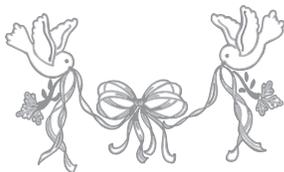
Then a major breakthrough came in April 2001. A review of FBI records on Putnam, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, and just declassified in 1998, disclosed an amazing connection between Putnam and a “young man” who spoke Turkish and Chinese, and who was writing about his adventures in China circa 1935-38. According to the FBI files, Putnam was recruiting a “young man,” never identified by name, to be a double

agent against the Japanese at Los Angeles. The young man, said Putnam, was working for the Los Angeles Japanese Consulate and was furnishing them with aircraft data, construction information, ship movements, etc., gleaned from public sources. Putnam wanted the FBI to recruit him as a double agent. After an exchange of letters with J. Edgar Hoover, and meetings with the LA FBI agents, it was clear the FBI didn’t want anything to do with this scene, and they suggested that Putnam contact Navy Intelligence. Putnam declined as he had “bad experiences” with two Navy admirals earlier.

But who was this “young man,” whom Putnam declined to identify to the FBI? Was he Kamal?

A social security death index check disclosed that an Ahmad Kamal was born in 1914 and died 13 October 1989 at Santa Barbara, California. The FBI in Los Angeles estimated the young man’s age at 24 in 1938. As we knew that the Kamal at Weihsein was age 30 in 1945, this Kamal was looking better to us, but we could not find any existing autobiographies or biographies in major libraries about this Ahmad Kamal.

Our conjecture then was that the author Kamal was the same Kamal as Putnam’s young man based on age and on the Central Asia background, and Kamal’s published book in 1938 at Santa Ana, near Santa Barbara. Why would Weihsien Kamal send a message to Putnam? A new book? Kamal seemed to be the LTM author but why would he use the intimate phrase “Love to Mother?” How could we ever find a specific link between Kamal as the “young man” and the Kamal that Putnam was recruiting?



The Final Link



*On 18 April 2001, I located Ahmad Kamal’s son in Southern California and his revelations about his father were extraordinary. Yes, the author of *The Seven Questions of Timur* and *Land Without Laughter*, and the Kamal at Weihsein Civilian prison camp were one and the same. Yes, there was a close link between Putnam and Kamal at Los Angeles before World War II.*

The following is based on his son’s recollection. After extensive traveling in Turkestan, China, and Central Asia, Kamal returned to the US circa the early ’20s. In the late 1920s or early ’30s Kamal obtained a pilot’s license and kept an airplane at the Burbank Airport. There, in the mid-thirties, he met and flew with Howard Hughes. At Burbank he also met George Putnam and Amelia Earhart. Kamal was close to Hughes’ personal secretary Nadine Henly. Earhart was at Burbank airport prior to her first world flight attempt in March 1937.

During this time in 1937-38, Kamal became closely acquainted with Putnam who was helping him find a publisher. About this time, 1938, Kamal published his *Seven Questions* book about his adventures in Central Asia, fighting against the Russians, imprisonment, and escape to Peking.

Sometime about 1939-1940, Kamal returned to China where he met and married his wife at Tientsin, China. The war broke out in December 1941 and soon afterwards, the Japanese Secret Police captured him and his wife. Refusing to cooperate, they were transferred to Weihsein Camp in the summer of 1943. There they remained until liberated in August 1945.

According to his son, shortly after the camp was liberated, Kamal, sent out two radio messages: one to Scribner and Sons about publishing a book, and one to George Putnam. His son said he has seen either notes

or a journal of that message and could repeat it almost by heart – something like “camp liberated, all was well, volumes to follow and love to mother.” The “love to mother” was added, said Kamal’s son, because Putnam had agreed to look after Kamal’s aging mother when Kamal left for China. Mrs. Kamal lived nearby and Putnam was to look in on her. It was an informal caregiver arrangement.

Kamal spoke Turkish, Chinese and was an “international figure.”

Kamal’s son said that his father never discussed with him any of Putnam’s efforts to recruit him for the FBI. (The son was born in 1950.)

After liberation, Kamal returned to the US, continued to publish, and lived in the Los Angeles area from 1945-51.

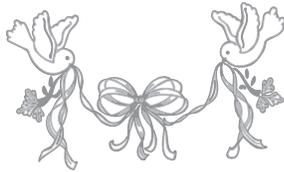
He does not know if Kamal ever got in touch with Putnam after the war.

In summary, Kamal said his father often discussed Amelia Earhart and various disappearance theories. His father, who knew Amelia, said she was not at Weihsein while he was there from 1942 until August 1945.

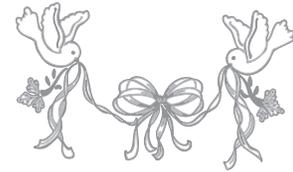
The story of Earhart being at Weihsein was, in the son’s words, “apocryphal” and that’s why he recalled his father’s stories while he was growing up in the 60s, 70s and 80s.

His father thought she went down in the sea.

The son said he would search through his father’s journals and provide any relevant document or record.



Conclusion



The author of the LTM message is Ahmad Kamal. Kamal was at Weihsein and he knew Putnam and AE. His message to Putnam was a generic hopeful notification. “Love to mother” was nothing more than an endearing message for Putnam to convey to his mom after his three years at the camp.

For those that wish to know more about Kamal I suggest reading his first two books. A further indicator of his mother’s role in Kamal’s life is seen in the dedication in his first book, *The Seven Secrets* in which he writes, “**TO MY MOTHER**” (in 20 point type).

Investigation Continuing

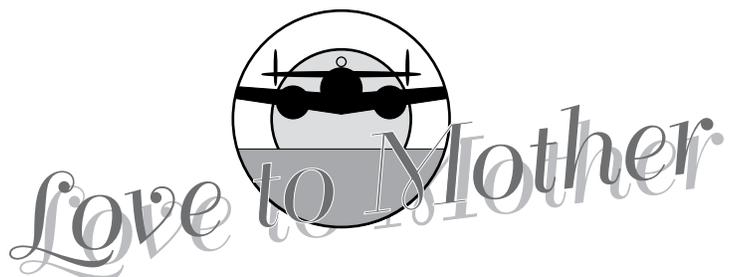
We intend to continue correspondence with Kamal’s son to obtain confirming documents and to supplement this preliminary report.

Acknowledgements

Laurie and I wish to thank Rollin Reineck, who initially researched and located State Department radiograms to Putnam and generously provided them. Also to Don Neumann, and TIGHAR members Pat Gaston (TIGHAR #2328), Don Jordan (TIGHAR #2109), and Andrew McKenna (TIGHAR #1045CE) for advice and direction in this investigation. Early researchers did not have the advantage of the 1998 declassified Putnam FBI file that disclosed the relationship between a Weihsein internee and Putnam.

THE AMELIA EARHART SEARCH FORUM

*You can sign up for the Amelia Earhart
Search Forum on TIGHAR’s web site,
www.tighar.org. T-shirts also available...*



www.tighar.org

To Look Down Like a Frigate Bird

The satellite imagery of Nikumaroro recently obtained especially for TIGHAR by Space Imaging of Thornton, Colorado (www.spaceimaging.com) has provided The Earhart Project with a search and search management tool of unprecedented value and utility. Blessed with minimal cloud cover over the island and virtually no sun-glint to obstruct our view into the water we now, for the first time, have the ability to look down on the atoll like one of the frigate birds who live there.

Of course, from the beginning of our investigation in 1988, we've used historical aerial photos of the island to research and document its features and search for any sign of Earhart, Noonan, and the Electra – and we've found some. It was forensic imaging analysis of 1941 photos by Photek, Inc. of Portland, Oregon in 1995 that led us, the next year, to the artifacts at what we call the "Seven Site." Descriptions in British files describing the finding of a skeleton (Earhart's?) on the island in 1940 now lead us to strongly suspect the Seven Site as the place where that discovery occurred. Forensic analysis of aerial photos taken in 1938 has revealed the presence at that site of features which appear to be worn footpaths at a time before the first settlers arrived on the island. We'll be taking a hard look at the

Seven Site when we return to Nikumaroro later this summer.

As valuable as these old photos have been in documenting the past and providing clues for the search, they are of limited use in planning and managing search operations in the present. The island's vegetation and man-made features have changed over the years. What was once open forest is now dense underbrush. Orderly coconut plantations have become jungles. Houses and administrative buildings have come and gone like the people who built them, while the SS *Norwich City* has steadily deteriorated from stranded wreck to scattered wreckage.

What we've always needed is high-quality color imagery that shows us exactly what is on the ground and in the water today. The Royal New Zealand Air Force was kind enough to give us copies of photos taken during routine fisheries patrol flights, but they were casual snapshots. We looked into hiring an aerial photo mission but Nikumaroro's remote location made such a venture prohibitively expensive. During



Gardner Island, April 30, 1939. U.S. Navy photo.



The chartered Gulfstream I used on TIGHAR's Kanton Mission in 1998. TIGHAR photo.

Niku II in 1991 we tried a video camera-carrying kite, but stability in the strong trade winds was a problem (just watching the tape made everybody sick.) We brought along an ultralight aircraft on the 1997 Niku III expedition (no small undertaking, that) but the seas were so rough and the wind so strong that we were never able to fully assemble the airplane, much less launch it. In 1998, during our flying expedition to Kanton Island, we hoped to

make a photo run over Nikumaroro in our chartered Gulfstream I but low rain clouds and fuel concerns made it too dangerous to try.

Satellite imagery was an option we explored on several occasions, but the only existing picture of the island from space was a conventional photograph taken through a window of the Shuttle, and ordering a special mission from one of the few commercial outlets was far too expensive – until we learned about Space Imaging. Through close coordination with the company's management and a cooperative arrangement with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) we were able to tailor an affordable mission that acquired data for TIGHAR's use in The Earhart Project and NOAA's use in its study of the world's endangered coral reefs.

The black and white photo reproduced here does not begin to convey the spectacular multi-spectral image acquired on April 16, 2001 by the Lockheed/Martin IKONOS 2 satellite. The

Satellite imagery by Spaceimaging.com.



color photo shows a brilliant turquoise lagoon surrounded by the green island, bordered by white sand beaches, and matted by the tan reef framed in white surf, all set in a blue/black sea – a true jewel of the planet. But this is more than a pretty picture. The image is made up of thousands upon thousands of little squares (pixels), each representing four meters and each of a very specific color. We can look at each of those pixels and ask the computer to show us every other pixel of exactly that same color. If it's a naturally occurring color – the green of a Buka tree, the tan of dead coral – there'll be lots of other pixels just like it. If it's something else – something anomalous to the island – it will stand out as unique. Once we've identified something on the ground or in the water that is of an "unnatural" color, we can find it in our Panchromatic (black and white) imagery, in which each pixel represents one meter on the ground, and see more detail about its shape. If it still looks interesting we can target it for in-person investigation when we get to the island later this summer.

How do we find it on the ground? There's another beauty of satellite imagery. Because every point in the photo is georeferenced, (that is, mapped according to latitude and longitude) we can use a simple hand-held GPS (Global Positioning System) instrument to guide us to within a few meters of the spot. We'll first need to "tweak" the lat/long in the photo by going to known points on the ground,

logging their actual coordinates, and entering a correction factor, but that's easy. For the first time we'll have a way to navigate the island, whether on the lagoon or deep in the bush, with confidence and precision. We'll be able to mark off on a map places we know we've searched, places where we've found things, places we want to check out – and be sure it's correct. Basic as that sounds, we've never before been able to do it.



"We're right here." "No, we're right here." TIGHAR photo by P. Thrasher.

It will truly be ironic, not to say poetic, if this imagery from a Lockheed/Martin satellite makes it possible for us to at last find a conclusively identifiable, if much older, product of the same company. Let's hope so.

Niku, Niku on the wall, Fairest island of them all...

TIGHAR members who have made a contribution of \$100 toward the acquisition and analysis of satellite imagery of Nikumaroro have been delighted with the 8Ðx10Ð color print they have received in appreciation. Many report that they've framed the photo and hung it on the wall. Their contributions, generously matched by Jim Thompson (TIGHAR #2185) of Select GIS Services, have more than covered the cost of the imagery and we can now apply further contributions to the cost of forensic analysis and processing of the data to be sure we get the maximum benefit from it.

Please note that copyright restrictions prevent us from releasing the raw data for amateur analysis but we can guarantee that you'll be hearing a lot about the results of the professional work being done.

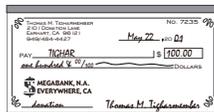
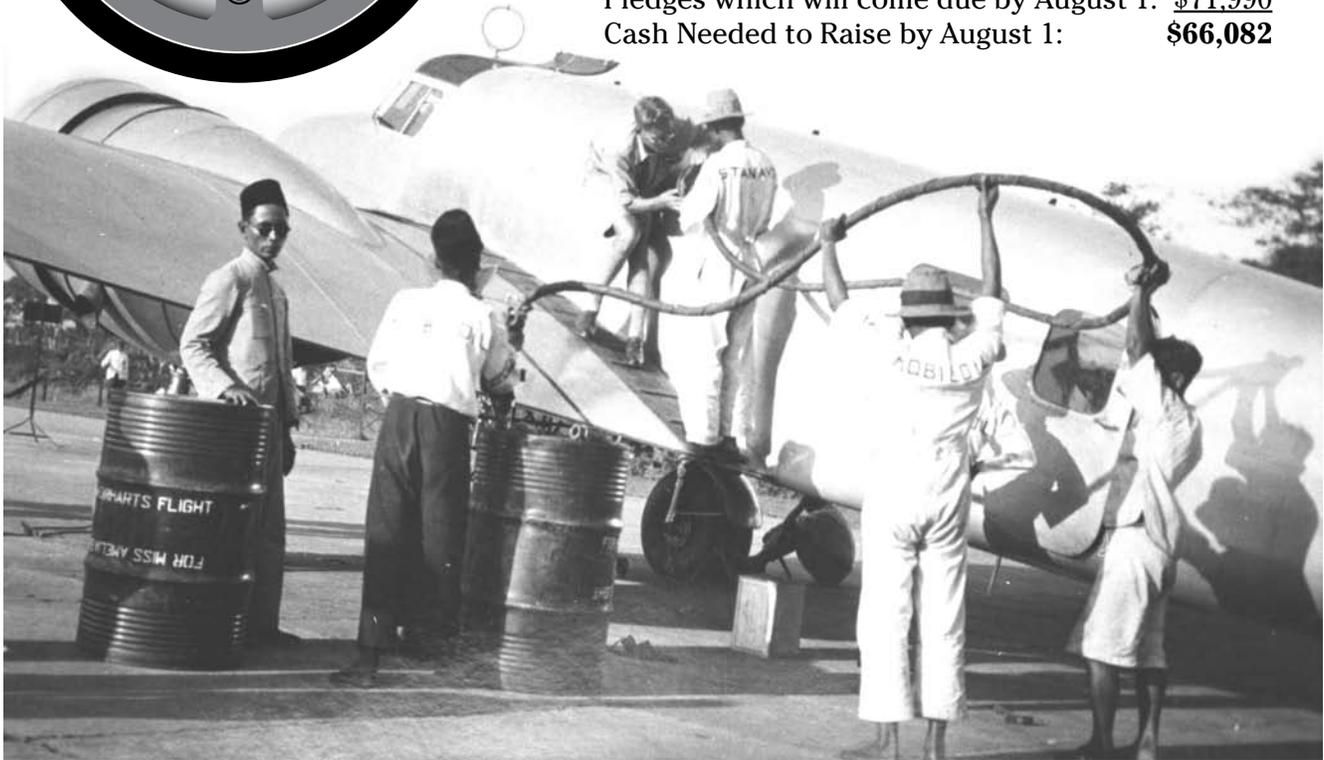
Please use the form on the back of this *TIGHAR Tracks* to make your contribution today.

Keeping the Fuel Flowing



Original Budget for Niku III:	\$500,000
Budget Extras:	
Satellite Imagery	\$3,000
Tarawa trip	\$4,000
Ten extra days of ship charter	\$50,000
Total Budget	\$557,000
Pledges of Support Received:	<u>\$373,600</u>
Balance to Raise	\$183,400

Cash in Hand Needed by August 1:	\$450,000
Cash in Hand to Date:	\$311,928
Pledges which will come due by August 1:	<u>\$71,990</u>
Cash Needed to Raise by August 1:	\$66,082



Please send me a copy (approximately 8"x10") of the SpacelMaging satellite photograph of Nikumaroro. I enclose my donation for \$100.

Name _____

Address _____

Daytime telephone _____ Email _____

Credit card # _____ Expiration date _____