

# TIGHAR TRACKS

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## The Knob That Wasn't



TIGHAR ARTIFACT 2-6-S-45 HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED. It is the “closure” portion of a type of “spout and closure” which was patented on December 20, 1932. This type of top was used on cans for a wide variety of products such as light lubricating oils and solvents. Whether the artifact’s presence on Nikumaroro is attributable to the castaways (Earhart and Noonan?), the Gilbertese colonists, Gerald Gallagher, the U.S. Coast Guard, or someone else is unknown and probably unknowable. Nonetheless, we now know what the thing is. We know it is not an adjustment knob from an aeronautical navigation instrument, or a starter button from a Lockheed Electra, or any of dozens of other speculative identities which have been considered since it was found at the Seven Site a year ago.



Artifact identification is, of course, at the heart of accurate analysis of any archeological site. The process by which we unlocked the identity of Artifact 2-6-S-45, including the mistakes we made along the way, serve as an illustration and a lesson in the methodologies that are leading us, step by step, toward the answer to the Earhart riddle.

### Lesson Number One: First Impressions Count

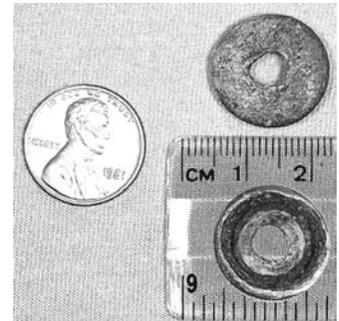
When initially found by Dr. Tom King, he thought the object was a small metal cap for a container of some kind. Closer inspection, however, revealed an absence of threading and the presence of damage around the central hole made it clear (or so we thought) that the object had once been attached to a shaft. Knurling around the edges completed the impression that what we had was a knob which originally turned a shaft which, in turn, performed some function on an instrument or device.

Our first description of the artifact was published in the November 2001 issue of *TIGHAR Tracks*.

*From TIGHAR Tracks, November 2001:*

#### ARTIFACT NUMBER: 2-6-S-45

**Material:** Non-magnetic silver-colored metal beneath rust-colored exterior. The exterior edge has small grooves and there are letters (worn and, so far, illegible) on the upper surface which may include patent information. There is a separate internal channel around the interior surface.

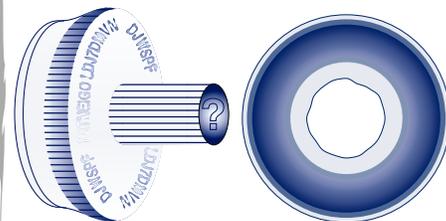


**Weight:** approx. .2 oz.

**Condition:** Good. Bent and broken.

**Speculation:** This appears to be a knurled adjustment knob. There may have been a separate, smaller concentric knob that turned a disk that rotated within the internal channel. This suggests a knob for making coarse and fine adjustments to some kind of small instrument or machine.

If we can decipher the letters on the exterior surface we might be able to make a positive identification.



Ironically, our theoretical reconstruction of what the artifact originally looked like was remarkably accurate.

### **Lesson Number Two: No Name Calling**

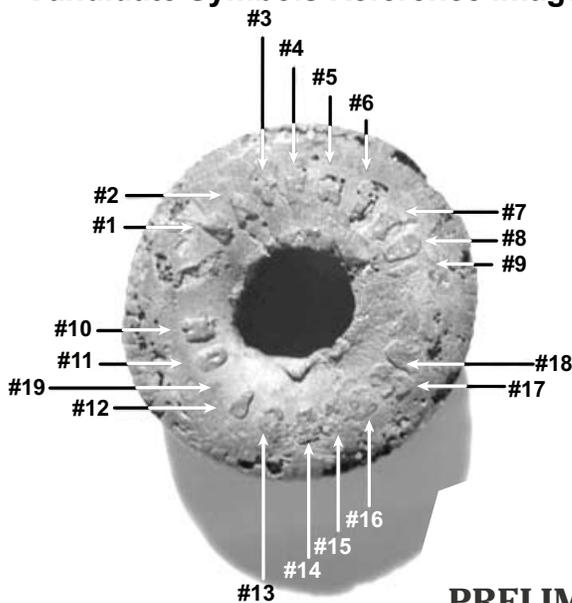
Because it looked like a knob we started to refer to it as “the knob” and that was a mistake because it tended to prejudice our thinking. If it was a knob it was about the right size to be an adjustment knob for an aeronautical bubble octant and that would be very nice indeed, but we also recognized that our best avenue of investigation was the inscription cast into the surface. The problem was how to decipher it.

With the generous help of the U.S. Naval Academy’s Nondestructive Testing Laboratory in Annapolis, Maryland we were able to subject the “knob” to inspection using a Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM). Unfortunately, extreme magnification did not make the features

cast into the surface any easier to read, even after cleaning with ultrasound, but the SEM did reveal the rather startling fact that the object was made of lead. In fact, that was the problem. The soft lead features had been distorted by impacts to the surface of the “knob” but it did appear that the word PATENT was present. If there was also a patent number present we should be able to make a positive identification.

Forensic imaging specialist Jeff Glickman at PHOTEK in Portland, Oregon next took on the challenge of deciphering the elusive inscription. After trying a variety of techniques including X-ray and CT Scan he settled on precisely controlled lighting and enhanced digital photography as the best method for reconstructing the features or at least narrowing down the possibilities. Many hundreds of hours of work later he submitted his Preliminary Letter of Opinion.

## **TIGHAR Artifact 2-6-S-45 Candidate Symbols Reference Image**



**Source Image: DSCN0046.TIF**

**Image: Unprocessed/Raw**

**Image Size: 15MB**

**Imager: Nikon Coolpix 5000**

**Imager Configuration: Macro, Fine, Noise Control On**

**Illumination Source: Mole-Richardson Mini-Mole**

**Illumination Configuration: Direct, 45 degrees.**

**Processed by PHOTEK**

**May 8, 2002 (Updated June 2, 2002)**

**Portland, Oregon**

**Jeff Glickman**

**503-949-6200**

*Jeff Glickman examines Artifact 2-6-S-45.  
TIGHAR photo by P. Thrasher.*



## **PRELIMINARY LETTER OF OPINION**

*July 12, 2002*

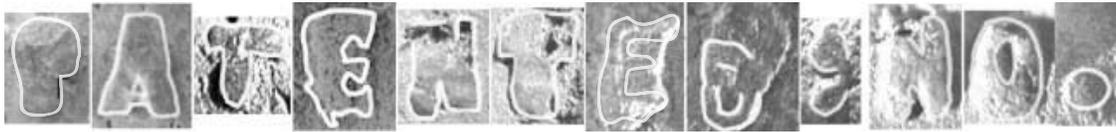
Dear Mr. Gillespie:

This letter is my preliminary opinion regarding TIGHAR artifact 2-6-S-45 which has been in my possession and under examination since May 4, 2002. 2-6-S-45 is commonly known as the “knob” and appears to have multiple raised symbols on its surface. On May 8, 2002, the JPEG image “knobref.jpg” was created using a Nikon 5000 digital camera, diffuse lighting, and the macro lens setting. The resulting knobref.jpg image defines 19 candidate symbol sites. During the course of the examination of 2-6-S-45, photomicrographs were taken of each of the symbol sites, and subsequently analyzed.

Analyses were performed in a controlled lighting “white box” consisting of a three-sided box of white foam core. A Celestron Microscope with a custom-built CCD imager was placed in the center of the white box. A 4x objective and a 10x eyepiece lens were used for the duration of the analysis. The CCD imager was connected to a frame grabber on an IBM-PC compatible computer. Captured images were analyzed using proprietary software, and individual symbol reports were prepared using Adobe Photoshop™. The illuminator used was a Mole-Richardson Co. Mini-Mole Type 2801 S/N 32375 with a Type 280108 Mole Focal-Spot collimator. The illuminator was mounted on a Matthews Studio Equipment (MSE) C-STD 2xR, FL 20.

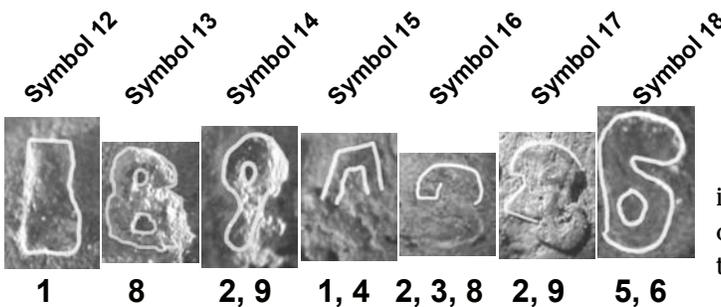
Each symbol site was examined using "Optical Tomography." This method uses an intense and highly collimated broad-spectrum illuminator which is rotated through 360 degrees in the XY plane around the artifact. After each rotation, the angle of the illuminator is increased by 5 degrees in the YZ plane. The resulting series of shadows reveal the detailed surface topography of an individual symbol on the artifact.

As previously reported, symbols 1 through 9 are **PATENTED**; symbols 10, 11 and 19 are **NO.**, which account for 12 of the 19 symbols.



Seven of the 19 symbols remain. Given the context "PATENTED:" and "NO." it is presumed the remaining 7 symbols are numeric, representing a United States utility patent number. These 7 symbols contain more contamination and damage than the initial 12, which resulted in ambiguity for some symbols. Information regarding each symbol can be found in the corresponding email for each individual symbol. This opinion letter shall summarize the findings of these 7 emails.

For each symbol numbered 12 through 18, the visible features of the symbol were compared with the features required for each number "0" through "9." Each number "0" through "9" was either excluded or included on the basis of the visible features as a candidate symbol for the site. For some sites, this meant the symbol could be one of N possible numbers. The process of eliminating numbers at each site reduces the search space from 10 million possible patents. The following summarizes the numbers by site:



The number of possible combinations is computed by multiplying the number of possible values at each site together:  $1 \times 1 \times 2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 2 \times 2 = 48$ . These 48 combinations are enumerated below in numerically ascending order. Each of these 48 combinations constitute a US patent number, each of which was retrieved using the online repository at the US Patent and Trademark office

located at [www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov). [At this point Jeff inserted a lengthy table of his findings at the patent office. We have omitted this information to save space, but it is included in its entirety at <http://www.tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Bulletins/knobbulletin/knob9.html>.]

The first of the two patents of immediate interest is: #1891395: Gun Sight, issued 12/20/1932 to G.O.C. Probert. The diagram in this patent shows a knob similar to 2-6-S-45; however, the gun sight is for field artillery. Perhaps one could argue that during WWII field artillery might have been stationed on Nikumaroro, but

there is currently no historical evidence to support this. Note that Probert was a British citizen seeking

protection for his invention in the United States. This suggests that if 2-6-S-45 originated from a gun sight, that it might have been of British origin or manufacture, and possibly brought to Nikumaroro by an Australian, New Zealander, or Britain.

The second of two patents of immediate interest is: #1824826: Engine Starter, issued 9/29/1931 to Charles Marcus of the Eclipse Machine Company.

This is interesting because William Bendix invented the automatic starter drive to eliminate hand cranking of automobile engines in 1911 and 1912. Bendix successfully licensed his design to Eclipse Manufacturing Company in 1913. Presumably over the next 15 to 20 years, Eclipse developed this technology, culminating in this patent which is a direct connect automatic electric starter specifically for aircraft engines. What is most interesting is that when I inquired with about how Earhart's engine was started, I was told that the Lockheed 10E had an Eclipse direct electric starter, type E-160. While possibly coincidental, this is interesting enough to warrant research into the specific installation of the 10E's E-160 to determine if there are any components which resemble the knob.

I recommend a review of all 48 patents, and detailed investigations into the above two patents with the intent of provably including or excluding them as matches to 2-6-S-45.

Ric, thank you for the opportunity to work with you again, and I look forward to our next project together. Please call me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,  
 Jeff Glickman, Photek  
 Board Certified Forensic Examiner  
 Fellow, American College of Forensic Examiners  
[glickman@PhotekImaging.com](mailto:glickman@PhotekImaging.com) · 503-949-6200

The field artillery gunsight was easy to eliminate – the largest artillery that was ever on Nikumaroro was a .30 caliber machine gun at the Coast Guard Loran station – but the coincidence of the Eclipse starter was intriguing. The Lockheed Model 10E used Eclipse Type E-160 starters for its Pratt & Whitney engines. Research quickly revealed that there is nothing on an E-160 starter that looks anything like Artifact 2-6-S-45 but the starter buttons in the cockpit were the right size. The buttons, however, were shielded by a spring-loaded metal cover so old photos did not reveal what they looked like.

**And the Winning Number is....**

Meanwhile, researchers on TIGHAR's Earhart Search Forum email group were exploring others of the 48 possibilities Jeff Glickman had identified and in early August, Angus Murray of Sheffield, England hit paydirt when he found a collector who had a can of "Revelation Gun Oil" which featured a spout and closure bearing the same inscription as Artifact 2-6-S-45 right down to the colon after the word "PATENTED." The correct interpretation of the patent number on the artifact is 1891826.



*Photo courtesy Angus Murray*

As Angus wrote to the Earhart forum:

"[E]verything dropped into place. Lead is a most unusual engineering material and I can think of few examples where it might be used as a knob. As a closure however it has a number of advantages. It is easily crimped

into place. It forms an effective seal at the resealable end of the spout. It will produce no sparks in a lighter-fluid refill application. "... This is one application that makes complete sense. It is also easy to see how the ragged hole arises in the middle, from where the spout has been broken out."

To complete and confirm the identification process, Kenton Spading (TIGHAR #1382EC) located a collector in Minnesota who had a can of Permatex "Solvo Rust Oil" with the same kind of spout and closure. TIGHAR was able to purchase the can for direct comparison to the artifact.



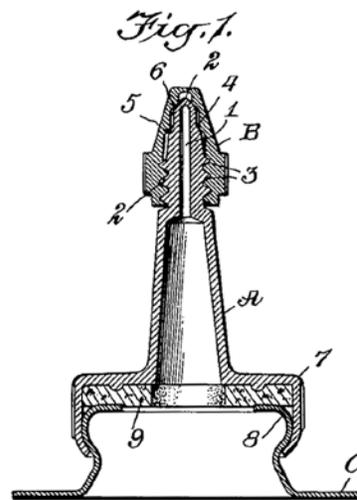
As with the gun oil can found by Angus, the spout on the rust oil can bears the same inscription and patent number as Artifact 2-6-S-45 but the shape of the cap is somewhat different.

If we were able to find an exact match we'd know what product our artifact was associated with and that information might give us a better idea who left it there, but gun oil, lighter fluid, and light lubricating oil are all possibilities that could be associated with the Coast Guard, the colonists, or even Earhart.

The artifact, however, has been identified. A question has been conclusively answered and, in archeology as in life, conclusive answers are rare. In working our way through the identification process we have built relationships, developed techniques, and learned lessons that will help us identify other artifacts. The quest continues.



*TIGHAR photos by R. Gillespie.*



**1,891,826**  
**E. L. M<sup>o</sup>GINNIS**  
 SPOUT AND CLOSURE  
 Filed Jan. 15, 1932  
**Dec. 20, 1932.**

*This is one of the illustrations from the 1932 patent application for the spout and closure.*

# Special Report To Be Published

THE NEXT ISSUE OF *TIGHAR TRACKS* WILL BE A LARGE magazine-format Special Report that will detail new research into three questions that are central to TIGHAR's, and indeed anyone's, investigation of the Earhart disappearance:

## **1 The Fuel Question: How long and how far could the airplane have flown?**

It is a truism that unless and until conclusively identifiable wreckage is found there is no way for anyone to know whether the airplane ran out of fuel near its intended destination or continued on for some period of time to some other location. However, over the past few years, millions of dollars have been spent, and there are plans to spend millions more, on hi-tech searches for the Earhart Electra on the ocean floor near Howland Island. All of these efforts are based on the premise that fuel exhaustion occurred within moments of the last inflight radio transmission heard by the *Itasca* at 08:43 (20:13 Greenwich time). Although the studies said to support that theory have not been made public, and even though the underwater searches to date have been unsuccessful, the willingness of individuals and companies to spend great sums of money to test the hypothesis gives the impression that they must be acting upon valid assumptions reached via thorough research.

TIGHAR cannot, of course, critique studies that we haven't been permitted to see, but we can, and have, conducted our own study using not only the commonly available particulars of the Lae/Howland flight but also new information from previously untapped primary sources which shed new light on the theoretical and demonstrated capabilities of the Lockheed Model 10E Special airplane. The TIGHAR study will show that the airplane should have had more than enough fuel to reach Nikumaroro and that suggestions of premature fuel exhaustion rely upon conditions or actions for which there is no evidence.

## **2 The Radio Riddle: Why did in-flight radio transmissions from the airplane stop?**

Voice radio transmissions from NR16020 were heard by radio operators aboard the *Itasca* at 03:45, 04:53, 06:14, 06:15, 06:45, 07:42, 08:00, and 08:43 local time on the morning of July 2, 1937. All of the messages were on 3105 kilocycles and the last three transmissions were heard at maximum strength. In the final instance, Earhart said she was going to switch to her other frequency, 6210 kilocycles, but nothing more was heard. Proponents of the theory that the airplane crashed at sea maintain that the silence suggests that the

aircraft ran out of gas within moments of that transmission. TIGHAR's technical study of the radio propagation situation in the Central Pacific on that morning will show that there are other more plausible explanations for *Itasca's* failure to hear anything more from Earhart.

## **3 The Distress Call Dilemma: Were any of the supposed post-loss radio calls genuine?**

In the days following the Earhart disappearance well over a hundred separate radio transmissions, suspected at the time of being distress calls from the missing plane, were heard by government and commercial stations, HAM operators, and ordinary people listening on home "short-wave" sets. The purported signals from the lost flyers dominated press coverage of the search and caused widespread anticipation that Earhart and Noonan would be rescued. In the wake of the failed search, government authorities pronounced all of the transmissions to have been either hoaxes or misunderstandings, but if even one message was genuine the airplane could not have gone down at sea.

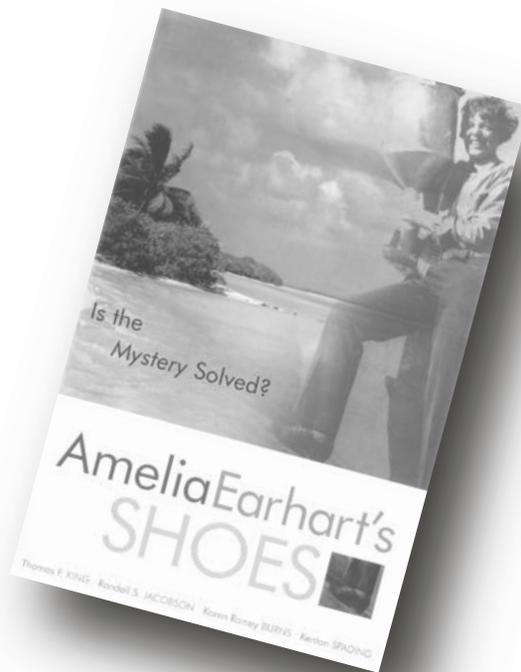
Over the decades several researches have attempted to interpret various of the alleged signals and numerous theories have been advanced to explain them, but no one has ever done a comprehensive analysis of all of the reported transmissions to determine whether, as a body of evidence rather than individual events, they exhibit patterns or consistent characteristics which might help to confirm or deny their legitimacy.

For the past two years TIGHAR has been assembling data and developing methodologies for an in-depth study that will permit a quantitative assessment of the entire post-loss radio picture. TIGHAR researchers Dr. Randy Jacobson (TIGHAR #1364), Bill Moffett (TIGHAR #2156EC), and others have scoured original sources to identify the particulars of each reported incident. The Master List thus compiled is the basis for analysis by Bob Brandenburg (TIGHAR #2286) using computer modeling of radio propagation and accurate tidal hindcasting made possible by data collected during the Niku III expedition. The entire picture will be assembled and presented in a Post-Loss Radio Matrix as the third element in the Special Report.

Finally, the Special Report will include a concise summary of the evidence found to date which supports the hypothesis that the Earhart flight ended at Nikumaroro. The studies presented in the Special Report will provide academically sound assessments of some of the most basic questions in the Earhart mystery and will be one of the cornerstones of TIGHAR's fund-raising efforts for the Niku V Expedition.

# Do You Have Your Shoes?

***Amelia Earhart's Shoes – Is the Mystery Solved?*** By Thomas F. King, Randall S. Jacobson, Karen Ramey Burns, and Kenton Spading. AltaMira Press, 2001, \$24.95.



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**“The authors have taken one of the great mysteries of modern times, provided a story line that could only have been conceived by Steven Spielberg, and created a book that will keep you up until you turn the last page.”**

*Greg Stemm, founder of the Professional Shipwreck Explorers Association*

**“Although we still do not know where we might find Amelia Earhart’s lost plane, here is a compelling scientific argument for one place to look.”**

*Dr. Robert D. Ballard, president of the Institute for Exploration and discoverer of the Titanic*

**“A rare camaraderie is forged by sunburn, sea sickness, exhaustion, and a shared dedication against all odds and in defiance of all criticism ...TIGHAR has already gathered evidence that they are searching in the right place...(They) have sifted meticulously through dirt, scoured murky lagoons, and dived the fringing reef.”**

*Skin Diver Magazine*

Published just prior to TIGHAR’s Niku III Expedition, *Amelia Earhart’s Shoes – Is the Mystery Solved?* is the story of the first twelve years of The Earhart Project as told by four TIGHAR members who participated in much of the research. The book was an independent undertaking by Dr. Tom King who served as the Project Archaeologist on the 1989, 1997, and 2001 expeditions to Nikumaroro and the 1998 expedition to Kanton Island. Tom also supervised the 1999 Fiji Bone Search. Assisting him with the book were oceanographer Dr. Randy Jacobson who has been very active in project

research since 1992; forensic osteologist Dr. Kar Burns who participated in the 1999 and 2001 expeditions, and Kenton Spading who did extensive archival research for the project and participated in the 1997 expedition and the 1998 trip to Kanton Island.

Although we scrupulously avoided any editorial input, TIGHAR did give the authors free access to documents, maps and photographs and provided fact-checking when requested. In return, several of the authors have generously donated their royalties back to the project. The result is a no-holds-barred, critical look at The Earhart Project from the perspective of volunteer insiders. Tom King’s casual style captures the irreverent yet scientifically rigorous tone of TIGHAR’s work and lets the reader share in the trials and tribulations of the two-steps-forward-one-step-back investigative process. “Shoes” is an excellent description of what has become an epic quest and sales of the book have already added several thousand dollars to the project coffers.

You can order *Amelia Earhart’s Shoes – Is the Mystery Solved?* directly from the publisher at <http://www.altamirapress.com>.



# Amelia Earhart & the Loch Ness Monster

**“It was a June morning in 1934 ... as the mist shredded away under the warm sunlight ... [s]omething rose from the water like a monster of pre-historic times, measuring a full thirty feet from tip to tail.”** The testimony of Alexander Campbell as related by Timothy Dinsdale in *Loch Ness Monster*, (London, 1961).

In December of 1933 the Depression-ridden public was astounded to learn that a great monster lurked in the depths of a remote Scottish loch. The recent completion of a new road along the shore of Loch Ness had, for the first time, brought civilization to the doorstep of the beast’s lair and sightings were flooding in. In April 1934 a photograph of the monster’s head and neck rearing from the water’s surface clinched Nessie’s place in the popular imagination.



Three years later, in July of 1937, the public received another shock when it learned that Amelia Earhart, “Lady Lindy,” “First Lady of the Air,” had vanished in mid-ocean on the very brink of completing her round-the-world flight. What seemed like the whole U.S. Navy raced to the rescue, her faint radio calls for help providing fodder for two weeks of banner headlines. But despite what was called “the greatest sea and air search in history” no trace of the martyred flier or her navigator was found.

The popular impression of what had happened in Scotland and the Central Pacific was far from accurate, and the events reported were much less mysterious than the stories that appeared the news media. In each case, the facts never stood a chance against a fortuitous combination of unrelated events which greatly increased

**“One day in 1937 ... riding her bicycle down the beach road on Saipan ... she saw a large, two-motored plane fly overhead and disappear in the vicinity of the harbor ... . A little while later, when she reached the beach area, she found a large group of people gathered around two white persons ... one was a woman.”** The testimony of Josephine Blanco Akiyama as related by Fred Goerner in *The Search for Amelia Earhart* (New York, 1966).

public acceptance of sensational theories later advanced to explain them.

## Hollywood History

The seminal event in the Loch Ness Monster phenomenon was the release in 1933 of *King Kong*. This masterpiece of a new genre of science-fiction films popularized the prospect of out-sized beasts in exotic haunts waiting to be discovered by modern adventurers. Indeed, one scene depicted a prehistoric reptile capsizing a raft on a foggy lake. When a fuzzy photograph of the Scottish monster hit the headlines in 1934 it bore a remarkable resemblance to the creature who had wreaked havoc on the screen a year before. Then, on December 22, 1938, a fishing boat off the coast of South Africa hauled in a living coelacanth, a primitive fish thought to be long extinct. In the public mind the concept was validated. If a prehistoric fish could live in the ocean why not an aquatic dinosaur in Scotland?

The Earhart legend also began with a Hollywood film. The 1937 disappearance was old news when, in 1943, RKO Radio Pictures (the same folks who gave us *King Kong*) released *Flight For Freedom* starring Rosalind Russell and Fred MacMurray as a thinly disguised Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan. The film told the story of a patriotic lady flyer and her lover/navigator who feign their own disappearance to give U.S. forces an excuse to reconnoiter secret Japanese fortifications in the central Pacific. Just as in the monster myth, fiction became the model for “fact.” The president of the Georgia Institute of Technology, M. L. Brittain, had been board the battleship U.S.S. *Colorado* for the 1937 ROTC training cruise which, quite unexpectedly, became the search for Amelia Earhart. The hoopla surrounding the release of *Flight For Freedom* prompted him to suddenly remember that during the voyage he got “a very definite feeling that

Amelia Earhart had some sort of understanding with officials of the government that the last part of her around-the-world flight would be over those Japanese islands.” The film was widely circulated among units in the Pacific Theatre and by the time U.S. troops went ashore in the Marshall Islands and on Saipan in 1944 many were on the lookout for Amelia Earhart.

### **Knights Errant**

Still, neither Nessie nor Amelia would have attained true legendary stature without a champion to bring their story to a new and eager post-war generation. By strange coincidence, both Timothy Dinsdale and Frederick Goerner took up their crusades in 1960, inspired, in each case, by the dramatic appearance of a new witness to the old mystery. Each conducted multiple expeditions in search of proof for his theories and each, lacking that proof, wrote a best-selling book about his quest. In the case of the Loch Ness Monster’s appearance and Amelia Earhart’s disappearance the popularity of the books and the controversy surrounding them spawned a whole school of amateur sleuths who, in turn, hatched new theories or expanded on the originals, conducted research and expeditions, and, of course, wrote books and articles.

Tim Dinsdale was an aeronautical engineer in his mid-thirties and contemplating an impending lay-off when he first arrived at Loch Ness on April 16, 1960. Having read in *Everybody’s Magazine* (February 21, 1959) of a dramatic monster sighting by Alex Campbell he “could not doubt the truth of what I had read” (Binns, p. 107) and was determined to capture the monster on film. Campbell, however, had already admitted that what he had seen was most probably a line of cormorants swimming in the loch. Initially representing himself as a skeptic converted by his close encounter, Alexander Campbell was, in fact, the author of a May 2, 1933 article in the *Inverness Courier* which started the whole thing. During his eight days at Loch Ness, Dinsdale, after conferring with Campbell, took two brief 16mm film shots of what he said was the monster. Press conferences, television appearances and, in 1961, a book entitled *Loch Ness Monster* launched Dinsdale on a new career and gave the monster a new lease on life.

### **The “Terrible Beast”**

Dinsdale’s readers learned that reports of a great beast living in Loch Ness went back as far as the 6th century when St. Columba saved a man by frightening the monster with his voice. Numerous medieval references were cited, including an account in the 16th century chronicle *Scotorum Historia (History of Scotland)* of a “terrible beast” which came out of the loch and killed three men. (Binns, p. 57) The monster’s sudden re-

appearance in 1933 was attributed to blasting done during the construction of a new road along the shore and the increased public exposure the road provided.

Following the publication of *Loch Ness Monster* there flowed a seemingly endless stream of searchers, researchers and scientists intent upon finding, filming, and even capturing the beast who soon became affectionately known as Nessie. Millions of dollars, innumerable hours of surveillance, and the best underwater technology available were focused on the one mile wide, 22 mile long loch while the tourist industry of Invernesshire boomed. Widely publicized successes, like a photograph of the monster’s flipper taken by a remotely operated underwater camera in August 1972, fueled the search but ultimately proved inconclusive. The flipper photo, for example, turned out to be rather creatively computer enhanced.

It wasn’t until 1983, with the publication of Ronald Binns and R.J. Bell’s *The Loch Ness Mystery Solved*, that the discipline of academic historical investigation was applied to the problem. By insisting upon original source documentation of all claims and accepted scientific methodology in all research, Binns and Bell assembled a very different picture of what had been happening. They discovered that, contrary to legend, no monster tradition exists regarding Loch Ness. St. Columba’s oft-quoted encounter occurred, not on the loch, but on the River Ness miles away. Furthermore, a more complete reading of *The Life of St. Columba* reveals that the good Saint regularly used his great voice to frighten off all manner of ghosties, ghoulies and long-leggety beasties. The medieval references to a monster at Loch Ness either do not exist or are conveniently transplanted from other locations (the “terrible beast” lived in Argyle). Nessie, like King Kong, seems to have first appeared in 1933, but the circumstances surrounding that debut were not as advertised either.

Loch Ness, far from being remote, has been a primary cross-Highland thoroughfare for many centuries, with regular sail, then steamer, service along its 22 mile length from 1820 to 1929. The “new road” of 1933 was, in fact, merely a repaving of sections of a road first built in the late 1700’s and recommended for tourists in a 1906 road guide. The road’s most likely association with the monster sightings is the fact that the 1933 work generated debris such as lumber and barrels which littered the loch and may have been mistaken for floating creatures in the heavy mist.

Point by point, with sources footnoted and documentation cited, Binns and Bell demonstrated that not only is there no evidence of a monster living in Loch Ness, but there is overwhelming evidence that no such beast exists. Nonetheless, hopeful monster hunters with ever-more sophisticated technology, dogged by equally hopeful television crews, continue to probe the murky

depths of Loch Ness for a creature that can be found in any video rental store.

### **Encore for Amelia**

It was just a month after Tim Dinsdale's first trip to Loch Ness that Frederick Allan Goerner, news commentator at KCBS San Francisco, read an article in the May 27, 1960 *San Mateo Times* that would launch him on his own quest. It told of a local woman, Josephine Blanco Akiyama, who believed she had seen Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan on Saipan in 1937. As with the Loch Ness Monster, public interest in the Amelia Earhart mystery had waned in the years following World War II. Goerner was aware of allegations that Earhart had been captured by the Japanese but knew that no proof had ever been found. In his book *The Search For Amelia Earhart*, Goerner describes his first reaction to the Akiyama story as "highly skeptical" (Goerner, p. 2). However, after hearing the same story from her in person and making a few inquiries, he was sufficiently convinced of her credibility to persuade CBS News to send him to the Pacific. Twenty days after first learning of Mrs. Akiyama's recollections, Fred Goerner departed on what was to be the first of four expeditions to Saipan.

Goerner says that his opinion of Mrs. Akiyama's testimony was reversed in part because her attorney, William Penaluna, believed her. It seems Penaluna was representing the Akiyamas in a "war reparations case against Japan for damage done to their Saipan property during the war" (Goerner, p. 2). It was, in fact, the attorney who had arranged for the story to appear in the *San Mateo Times*. In his book Goerner expresses no concern at this revelation nor at the Akiyamas' refusal to divulge the names of people on Saipan who could corroborate the story unless CBS paid all expenses, plus lost wages, for Josephine's husband Maximo (but not the witness herself) to accompany Goerner to Saipan. Upon arrival Fred learned that the corroborating witness was Josephine's own brother-in-law, Jose Matsumoto. It was Jose to whom she had been bringing lunch that day in 1937 when, as an eleven year-old girl, she had seen the mysterious airplane and the two Americans. But rather than insist that they confront Matsumoto together, Goerner permitted Max to first meet with Jose alone. When Fred arrived "Maximo Akiyama was waiting for me and quite excited. 'Matsumoto remembers the incident. Matsumoto remembers the two American fliers.'" (Goerner, p. 45) But Jose, it turned out, was not an eyewitness. He did not claim to have seen the fliers — only to have heard the story.

In the course of his investigation Fred Goerner found other Saipanese who said they remembered various versions of such an incident. Some claimed to have seen white people on the island before the war. Others, like Matsumoto, only recalled hearing a story. One hundred

and eighty-seven of the two hundred people interviewed had no such recollection. Goerner decided to search the harbor bottom for Earhart's Electra and, on the second day, recovered assorted aircraft wreckage including a generator. At a press conference in San Francisco on July 1, 1960, Paul Mantz, Hollywood stunt pilot and former Earhart advisor, proclaimed the generator to be "... exactly like the generator I put aboard AE's plane." (Goerner, p. 67) Then, on July 5, three U.S. Air Force captains announced that they had "... photographic evidence and affidavits from seventy-two eyewitnesses to the capture and execution" of Earhart and Noonan on Saipan. (Goerner, p. 68) The Air Force investigated and found that none of the three had gone to Saipan and the "affidavits" were no more than names of people living on Guam and Saipan alleging to have information. The story was, according to one member of the investigating body, "a bunch of garbage." (Goerner, p. 68) The by-now celebrated generator also became garbage when Bendix Aviation Corp., who built the generators for the Earhart plane, completed an examination and reported that Goerner's artifact "... did not come from the airplane in which Amelia Earhart disappeared ...." (Goerner, p. 70) A similar scene was played out in 1962 when bones Goerner dug up on Saipan were touted as possibly being the long-sought proof of his theory. Forensic pathological analysis of the bones, however, found the hypothesis "not supported." (Goerner, p. 183)

In 1966 the results of Goerner's investigation were published by Doubleday as *The Search For Amelia Earhart*. The jacket proclaimed, "What happened to Amelia Earhart? The answers are here." The answers Goerner offered were that Earhart and Noonan were on an unofficial spy mission for the U.S. government. After flying over the secret Japanese base at Truk they made a crash-landing near Mili Atoll in the Marshalls. They were captured by the Japanese and taken to Saipan where they both died.

*The Search For Amelia Earhart* was a best-seller and is still the most widely read and quoted of the Earhart books.

### **A Gallery of Conjecture**

Fred Goerner's opinion of what happened to Amelia Earhart later changed. In an April 13, 1989 letter to TIGHAR member Rob Gerth, Goerner wrote, "Amelia Earhart was not asked by the U.S.N. or U.S. Army Air Corps to overfly the Japanese Mandates in 1937 (although I believed this to be a strong possibility at the time I wrote *The Search For AE*) ... I chose Mili as the most logical landing place. Through the assistance of Dr. Dirk Ballendorf ... I was able to disabuse myself of that conjecture ... ."

Peer review and the rejection of disproved hypotheses are cornerstones of scientific research — but it is

difficult to unpublish a book. *The Search For Amelia Earhart* did for AE what *Loch Ness Monster* had done for Nessie. In the years that followed its publication a gallery of authors brought forth their own variations on the theme.

### Scholarship and Frustration

In response, several noted historians have attempted to set the record straight, but the somewhat indignant reactions by serious scholars ran up against the same problem encountered by Binns and Bell in Scotland. It cannot be proven that there is no Loch Ness Monster – only that one cannot be found. Likewise, although it can be shown many times in many ways that the notion of Earhart's capture by the Japanese is preposterous, that alone can never be sufficient to prove it didn't happen.

Quite naturally, the outlandishness of the capture/cover-up theories led to a resurgence of the opinion that Earhart and Noonan simply got lost, ran out of gas, ditched in open ocean and sank. Adopted as the official explanation after the Navy's unsuccessful search in 1937, the theory has two very attractive aspects: it is intuitive (anybody can see that it's a big ocean) and it's clean (the Navy search cannot be faulted because there was nothing to find).

It also presents the prospect of an intact, recoverable, and ultimately exhibitable aircraft awaiting discovery on the ocean floor. Where there is treasure – even, or perhaps especially, imagined treasure – there are treasure hunters, and in recent years the Electra-on-the-bottom has become the Loch Ness Monster of the Pacific with millions spent on hi-tech expeditions to capture it and bring it home. "Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Kong! The eighth wonder of the world!"

### Nothing Vanishes Without A Trace

Ultimately, the most important difference between the Loch Ness and Amelia Earhart mysteries is that while Nessie's appearance is a matter of debate, Amelia's disappearance is not. The Electra, AE and Fred Noonan existed in 1937 and it is the most fundamental axiom of all investigation that nothing vanishes without a trace. Whatever happened, sufficient remnants of aircraft and crew still exist somewhere to prove what really

happened. Only with their recovery and identification can the mystery be solved and the memory of the Earhart/Noonan flight return from the realm of legend to the pages of history where it belongs.

