

TIGHAR TRACKS

April 2017



AN UNCONVENTIONAL EXPEDITION

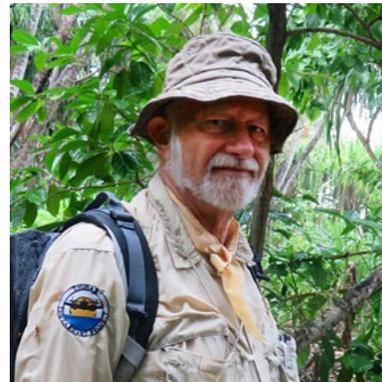
The 2017 expedition is markedly different from all eleven previous TIGHAR expeditions to Nikumaroro. From Niku I in 1989 to Niku VIII in 2015, TIGHAR expeditions have been funded by contributions to TIGHAR. Executive Director Ric Gillespie has traditionally been responsible for fundraising, selecting the team, chartering the vessel, overseeing the research agenda, organizing the logistics, and personally leading the field operation.

Niku IX is a TIGHAR-affiliated independent expedition organized and led by Dr. Tom King in association with Betchart Expedition's tourist cruise to Nikumaroro. As he did during the 2015 Betchart cruise, Dr. King will supervise on-shore research performed by Betchart passengers who complete an on-board course of instruction while en route to the island.

Dr. King will be assisted by a staff of experts who have either paid their own way or have individual sponsorship.

TIGHAR is supporting the expedition with research and assets to maximize the chances of finding conclusively identifiable wreckage from the Earhart Electra. The Niku IX underwater search of the main lagoon passage will be staffed by TIGHAR expedition veterans Andrew McKenna and John Clauss. If we can raise \$12,000 we'll add another experienced TIGHAR to the underwater search team. Ric Gillespie will not be participating in the 2017 trip. He's having an ophthalmic laser procedure for glaucoma and needs to be available for post-op monitoring.

The expedition vessel *Reef Endeavor* will depart Fiji on June 23 and is scheduled to arrive at Nikumaroro on June 28 and remain for eight days. At present there are roughly fifty passengers registered and there is plenty of room for more. See [Betchart Expeditions*](#) for details. Current plans call for daily satellite-phone updates on the TIGHAR website during the expedition.



Thomas F. King, Ph.D., serves on TIGHAR's Board of Directors as the organization's Senior Archaeologist. He has participated in five of TIGHAR's eleven expeditions to Nikumaroro.

Jaime Bach, Ph.D., is an anthropologist and archaeologist with expertise in I-Kiribati culture. Dr. Bach assisted Tom King on the 2015 Betchart cruise to Nikumaroro.



Joseph Cerniglia is an experienced TIGHAR researcher who participated in the 2015 Betchart cruise.

John Clauss has participated in all but one of TIGHAR's eleven expeditions to Nikumaroro.





Dawn Johnson is an archaeologist who serves on TIGHAR's Board of Directors. She assisted Tom King on the 2015 Betchart cruise to Nikumaroro.

Andrew McKenna serves on TIGHAR's Board of Directors and has participated in four TIGHAR expeditions to Nikumaroro.



Tom Roberts participated in the 2007 Niku V and the 2010 Niku VI TIGHAR expeditions. He also assisted Tom King on the 2015 Betchart trip.

Kenton Spading served on the 1997 Niku III expedition team and has participated in several research trips over the years of the Project.



Updates will be published on the TIGHAR website, and announced on TIGHAR's Facebook page. We are looking forward to the reports as they come in and wish the team the very best of weather, search conditions, and (as always) some luck as well.

Looking in the Wrong Place (Again)

On April 5, 2017 the fourth multi-million dollar search of the sea floor in the vicinity of Howland Island came to an end without finding any trace of the Earhart Electra. In more than a month of search operations, the optimistically-named Eustace Earhart Discovery Expedition covered 725 square miles of ocean bottom at one meter or better resolution using side-scan sonar deployed from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution's Remus 6000 autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV). The three million dollar cost was borne by former Google executive Alan Eustace who, in 2014, made a record-breaking parachute jump from 135,908 feet.

Primary contractor for the expedition was Nauticos LLC. The deep sea exploration company had previously conducted unsuccessful searches for the Electra in the Howland area in 2002 and 2006. The 2006 search was funded by the Waitt Foundation, of Gateway Computers founder Ted Waitt. (Waitt went on to finance the 2009 film "Amelia" starring Hillary Swank). Altogether, Nauticos has now thoroughly inspected nearly 2,000 square miles of area north and west of Howland Island.



The Remus 6000 AUV is similar to but has greater capability than the Bluefin 21 AUV deployed by Phoenix International during TIGHAR's 2012 Niku VII expedition.

Nauticos' failure to find the Lockheed on the ocean bottom near Howland Island doesn't prove it isn't there. What proves it isn't there are the many radio distress calls that were sent from the aircraft for six nights following its disappearance. As was known at the time, those signals could only have come from the aircraft if it was on its wheels and able to run an engine to recharge the battery upon which the transmitter relied for power. When the Navy's aerial search failed to see an aircraft on land, it was assumed – but never proved – that the messages were somehow bogus. The Navy's subsequent open-ocean search turned up nothing. If only one of the 57 credible receptions was genuine, the airplane did not go down at sea.

A three-part discussion of the assumptions upon which the Crashed & Sank theory is based and a response to Nauticos' criticisms of TIGHAR can be found on the new [TIGHAR blog](https://tighar.org/wordpress/).*

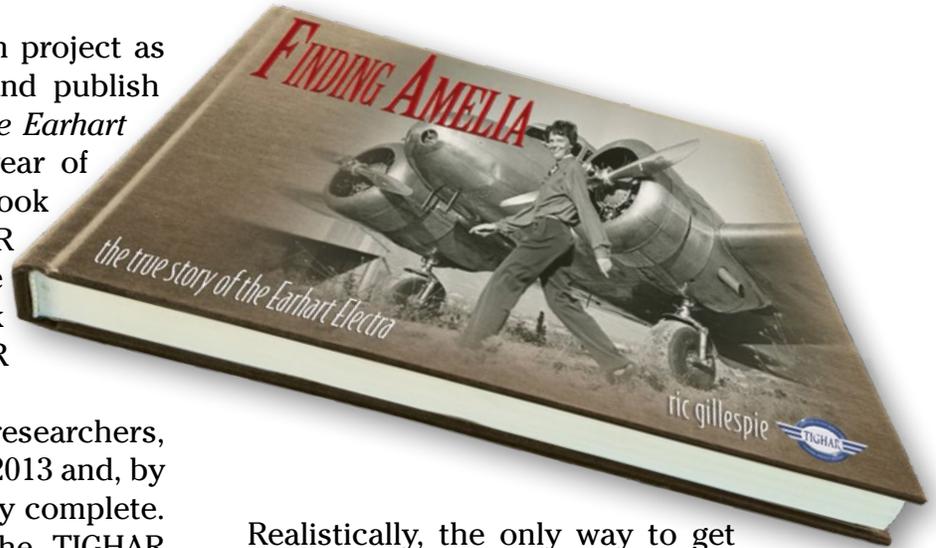
*<https://tighar.org/wordpress/>

MAXIMUM EFFORT

We've launched a new Book Patron project as part of a maximum effort to finish and publish *Finding Amelia — The True Story of the Earhart Electra* in this, the 80th anniversary year of the Earhart disappearance. The Book Patron project supplements the TIGHAR Literary Guild as a means of funding the research and writing of the second book in the Finding Amelia series by TIGHAR Executive Director Ric Gillespie.

With the help of dedicated TIGHAR researchers, Ric began working on the new book in 2013 and, by last spring, the research was essentially complete. With the help of contributions to the TIGHAR Literary Guild, Ric was able to carve out enough time to complete the book outline and write drafts of the first two chapters and part of the third. Since then, the need to devote his time to general fundraising and research in preparation for the 2017 underwater search has kept Ric from making further progress with the writing.

We initially saw a need for a book about Earhart's Lockheed Electra because common misconceptions about the airplane, and the mis-identification of photos taken during its short career (July 1936 to July 1937), have often been used to support misguided theories about its disappearance. When we dug into the source material we discovered there was a much more important story to be told. Much of the traditional version of how and why Amelia acquired her famous Lockheed 10E Special is based upon her own statements in interviews and press releases written by her manager/husband George Putnam. The true story, documented in dozens of contemporary letters and telegrams, reveals a very different tale of miscalculation and compromise that put Earhart in what she knew was the wrong airplane for her world flight, with insufficient expertise to operate the radio equipment upon which her life depended. Thoroughly footnoted and replete with historical photos and detailed color illustrations, *Finding Amelia — The True Story of the Earhart Electra* will be the "prequel" that explains the tragedy described in the first TIGHAR book, *Finding Amelia — The True Story of the Earhart Disappearance*.



Realistically, the only way to get the book finished this year is to raise enough money to allow Ric to devote the next four months (May through August) to completing the remaining six chapters. To do that, we need to put together \$50,000.

Literary Guild members make contributions of \$100 and will receive a signed copy of the book when it's published. Book Patrons pledge at least \$5,000, payable in monthly installments if desired, and receive draft chapters for review and comment as the writing progresses as well as a signed copy of the book. Patron and Guild members will be acknowledged in the Acknowledgments section of the book.

So far we have four Book Patrons and seventy-two Literary Guild members. We've raised \$22,500 (with another \$3,500 in pledges) so we're over halfway there. Please use the flyer included with this *TIGHAR Tracks* or go to the TIGHAR website to make your contribution.



New Research, New Insights

An investigation is a living creature, always evolving as new information comes to light from fresh sources or is discovered lurking in old research.

A Surprise Witness

We thought we had interviewed all of the surviving veterans of Coast Guard Unit 92, the LORAN radio installation based at the southeast tip of Nikumaroro from 1944 to 1946 – and then along came Leslie Wiltshire. At 97, Les is sharp, witty, and brimming with memories of his time on the island. He was in the second batch of Coasties who staffed the station from August 1945 to its closing in May 1946. The information he provided us in an April 14, 2017 interview clears up several minor mysteries and misconceptions about events related to the Earhart disappearance. We'll have a full report in an upcoming issue of *TIGHAR Tracks*.



Leslie E. Wiltshire was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1919. Although he first came to the U.S. when he was six years old, there's still a Scottish burr in his voice. Photo by Joan Sacks, TIGHAR #3312CE.



Les and Ric discuss events on Nikumaroro in 1945/46. Photo by Joan Sacks, TIGHAR #3312CE.

Measuring Amelia

As part of TIGHAR's on-going support of forensic anthropologist Dr. Richard Jantz's re-evaluation of the castaway whose partial skeleton was found on Nikumaroro in 1940, we've been quantifying Amelia's physiology for comparison to the measurements taken by a British doctor. We have already forensically established her height and brachial index (arm bones ratio) and found them to be consistent with the castaway.

On April 17, 2017, with the cooperation of Purdue University Special Collections, TIGHAR Senior Researcher Gary Quigg (TIGHAR#1025CE) and Historic Clothing Manager Paula Guernsey took extensive measurements of the trousers and leather jacket in the Purdue collection. Dr. Jantz will use the measurements to derive information about AE's weight and build.

Amelia consults with her husband George Putnam circa 1932. She is dressed in the same jacket and trousers recently measured by TIGHAR. Courtesy Larry Inman "Remember Amelia" collection. Used by permission, all rights reserved.



MAXIMUM EFFORT

FINDING AMELIA the true story of the Earhart Electra



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MAXIMUM EFFORT

Yes, please include me in the TIGHAR Literary Guild. Enclosed is my contribution of \$100.

Yes, please add my enclosed contribution to my membership in the TIGHAR Literary Guild.

Yes, please have Ric contact me about becoming a Book Patron.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Email _____

Daytime Telephone _____



Send checks to:

TIGHAR · 2366 Hickory Hill Road · Oxford, PA · 19363-4417 · USA



You can also make your contribution via PayPal: PayPal@tighar.org

OR

On line at the [TIGHAR Store](#).

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP.

FINDING AMELIA

the true story of the Earhart Electra

Introduction

It was the airplane she dreamed of, and flying it around the world would be the crowning achievement in a career already studded with aviation firsts. This is the untold story of how it all went wrong.

Chapter One: "The Twin-Engined Lockheed" • 1932 - 1934

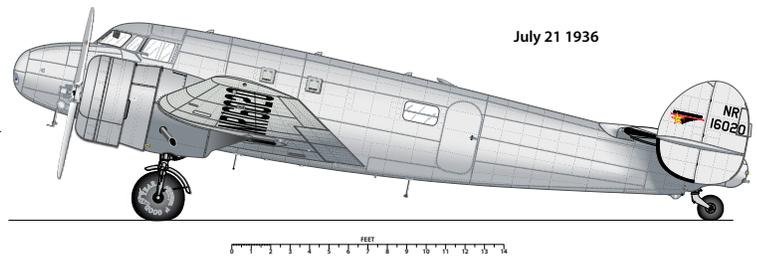
The politics and pragmatism behind the Lockheed Model 10 Electra and Amelia Earhart's surprising role in its initial design.

Chapter Two: "The Tree on Which Costly Airplanes Grow" • May 1935 - February 1936

How Earhart's husband persuaded Purdue University to fund a new airplane for Amelia.

Chapter Three: "The Realization of a Dream" • March 1936 - July 1936

The construction and delivery of a special long-range version of the Electra.



Chapter Four: Teething Troubles • August 1936 - September 1936

Fuel system difficulties, paperwork foul-ups, and the problem-plagued 1936 trans-continental Bendix Trophy Race.

Chapter Five: The Flying Laboratory • October 1936 - February 1937

Aerial refueling plans, ill-conceived modifications, and the installation and subsequent replacement of a potentially life-saving radio navigation system.

Chapter Six: "Honolulu Crack-up" • March 1937

The abortive first world flight attempt.

Chapter Seven: "Like Broken Bones" • April 1937 - May 1937

Desertion, desperation, and deceit in preparing for a second world flight attempt.

Chapter Eight: "Courage is the price..." • June 1937 - July 1937

How Earhart pressed on with the world flight substituting courage for competence.

Epilogue

The tragic events of July 2, 1937 were not the consequence of misfortune but the inevitable result of inflated aspirations, predictable events, and poor decisions.

