

A Psychological Treatment of Betty's Notebook

J. Guthrie Ford, Ph.D. TIGHAR #3422R

The Niku Hypothesis stipulates that Amelia Earhart landed on Gardner, now Nikumaroro, Island after failing to find Howland Island on July 2, 1937. Earhart appears to have transmitted by voice from the 2nd through the 7th using her aircraft radio.¹ On the 5th, an American adolescent, Betty Klenck, heard and transcribed words ostensibly spoken by Earhart and a man (Betty did not know Noonan's name). Betty's Notebook² is important to the Earhart project because as post-loss evidence it enhances the likelihood that the famous aviatrix landed on Nikumaroro (i.e., did not crash and sink). The author, a research psychologist, was drawn to Betty's Notebook as the largest collection of Earhart's apparent post-loss language. From it, he hoped to learn more of the Earhart story at the psychological and behavioral levels, and the Notebook did not disappoint.

Betty transcribed the words she heard onto five school notebook pages, and the first order of business was to assemble the Notebook words to appear in one view, as per Table 1. Speakership in the table is designated AE or FN. Speakership information was obtained from the Notebook,³ Gillespie (2006, pp. 181-185),⁴ and Gillespie (2013).⁵ Also, see endnote 3 for the both-speakers topic. The Notebook's numerous topics required color coding in Table 1 and a second table as well.

tables 1 and 2 go about here

FRAGMENTATION AND CONTEXTUAL PURPOSE

Betty described the voice signal as fading in and out. Indeed, the erratic signal caused items to be separated by unspecified time intervals; the erratic signal also caused word units to become fragmented, making unintelligible much of what Betty heard and transcribed. To make the Notebook material intelligible, the author used the procedure of contextual purpose (after Gillespie's, 2006, inventive work on the Notebook) (Notebook items this researcher was incapable of rendering intelligible are in the appendix.)

The procedure of contextual purpose is illustrated with the AE fragment *stop*

AE 158 mi. 44 N.E.
AE Help me
AE W40K Howland port or
W O J. Howland port
FN waters high
AE here put your ear to it
AE This is Amelia Putman (*sic*)
“ “ “ “
AE SOS
FN stop--Amelia
FN speak
FN Uncle
FN oh oh
AE (**crying now**)
AE help
AE help us quick
AE I can feel it
AE your right
AE Bob
AE come here just a moment
AE 58 338
AE send us help
FN Amelia take it
FN hear it
FN help help
FN I need air
FN Amelia things are
FN here I come - oh
FN let me out of here
FN different suffer
FN Amelia
FN take it away Howland
AE N.Y. N.Y. N.Y.
FN Marie Marie
AE N.Y. N.Y.
AE Oh, if they could hear me
AE N.Y. N.Y.
FN Marie
AE It's going
AE airport
FN Marie
FN oh
AE where are you
FN waters knee deep – let me out
AE where are you going
AE we can't bail out.
AE see.

<p style="text-align: center;">Table 1 Betty's Notebook</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Colored font explained in text.</p>
--

FN yes
FN Amelia — yes
FN oh oh ouch
AE are you so scared
AE what
AE Hello Bud
AE **Amelia**
AE South 391065 Z or E
AE fig 8 - 3.30 500 Z
AE 3E MJ3B
AE Z 38 Z 13 8983638
AE hurry
AE 3.15
AE are you there — fuzzy
AE hear from me hear from me
AE George
AE get the suitcase in my closet
AE Calf
FN are you
FN Marie Hey!
FN Marie
AE **Amelia Earhart**
AE Hey
AE watch that battery
AE what did you tell me to do
AE SOS
AE Will you help me
AE Will you please
AE all right!
AE what are you doing
AE 3Q rd 36
AE J 3
AE Amelia here
FN quick ket me out
AE 3630
AE knee deep over
AE stop
FN I can't make it
AE 38-3
AE huh
AE are you here
AE 3
AE darn [g.d.s.o.b.]
AE 30
AE N.Y.
AE N.Y.

AE 158 mi. 44 N.E.
 AE Help me
 AE W40K Howland port or
 W O J. Howland port
 FN waters high
 AE here put your ear to it
 AE This is Amelia Putman (*sic*)
 “ “ “ “
 AE SOS
 FN stop — Amelia
 FN speak
 FN Uncle
 FN oh oh
 AE (crying now)
 AE help
 AE help us quick
 AE I can feel it
 AE your right
 AE Bob
 AE come here just a moment
 AE 58 338
 AE send us help
 FN Amelia take it
 FN hear it
 FN help help
 FN I need air
 FN Amelia things are
 FN here I come - oh
 FN let me out of here
 AE different suffer
 FN Amelia
 FN take it away Howland
 AE N.Y. N.Y. N.Y.
 FN Marie Marie
 AE N.Y. N.Y.
 AE Oh, if they could hear me
 AE N.Y. N.Y.
 FN Marie
 AE It's going
 AE airport
 FN Marie
 FN oh
 AE where are you
 FN waters knee deep—let me out
 AE where are you going
 AE we can't bail out
 AE see

FN yes
 FN Amelia — yes
 FN oh oh ouch
 AE are you so scared
 AE what
 AE Hello Bud
 AE Amelia
 AE South 391065 Z or E
 AE fig 8 - 3.30 500 Z
 AE 3E MJ3B
 AE Z 38 Z 13 8983638
 AE hurry
 AE 3.15
 AE are you there — fuzzy
 AE hear from me hear from me
 AE George
 AE get the suitcase in my closet
 AE Calf
 FN are you
 FN Marie Hey!
 FN Marie
 AE Amelia Earhart
 AE Hey
 AE watch that battery
 AE what did you tell me to do
 AE SOS
 AE Will you help me
 AE Will you please
 AE all right!
 AE what are you doing
 AE 3Q rd 36
 AE J 3
 AE Amelia here
 FN quick let me out
 AE 3630
 AE knee deep over
 AE stop
 FN I can't make it
 AE 38-3
 AE huh
 AE are you here
 AE 3
 AE darn [g.d.s.o b.]
 AE 30
 AE N.Y.
 AE N.Y. 28 distress

Table 2
Notebook with
Colored Fonts for
Topics to Come

and FN item *quick let me out* (magenta items in Table 2). The context for these items is Noonan previously hounding Earhart to let him leave the aircraft. *Quick let me out* connotes an increase in urgency on Noonan's part, and Earhart appears to respond in kind with her imperative *stop* command, the strongest expression of denial (possibly spoken as, *stop asking to leave*).

EARHART'S APPARENT PURPOSES FOR SPEAKING

The blue AE items in Table 2 include the universally standard distress calls: sender's name, need for assistance (AE items *help us quick* and *SOS*), and location (AE items *N.Y.* and all other numeric and alphanumeric values--see Gillespie, 2006, pp. 181-185). Not surprisingly of course, a major purpose that Earhart apparently spoke was to secure rescue for herself and her navigator.

Among Earhart's putative distress calls were calls to her husband George.

● <i>are you there -- fuzzy</i> ● <i>hear from me hear from me</i> ● <i>George</i> ● <i>get the suitcase in my closet</i> ● <i>Calf</i>
--

(Fuzzy was inserted by Betty to describe the signal quality.) Earhart may have requested George to destroy some private papers in their California house--archival history points in that direction.⁶

The other intelligible Earhart words in Betty's Notebook apparently address issues related to and stemming from Fred Noonan's putative abnormal behaviors. A working hypothesis is that on July 2nd, Fred Noonan sustained a brain injury⁷ that may have caused various abnormal behaviors--test of that hypothesis requires a separate investigation.⁸ This research assumes that Noonan's abnormal behaviors, regardless of origin, disrupted Earhart while she was transmitting her distress calls. Earhart tried to manage the disruption as one might do with an unruly child: she apparently guided Noonan away from his abnormal behaviors by channeling attention in constructive ways. When that did not work, Earhart apparently set behavioral limits for Noonan.

managing Noonan by shifting his attention. ●*here put your ear to it* (radio earphone). ●*come here just a moment* ●*will you help me* (with something) ●*will you please* (do this). ●*all right!* (perhaps praising Noonan for something). ●*what did you tell me to do* (to make FN think normally).

managing Noonan by setting limits for him ●*what are you doing* (as in you can't do that) ●*where are you going* ●*we can't bail out. See.* ●*hey. watch that battery* ●*stop* (asking to leave).

frustration. ●*Oh, if they could hear me* ●*crying now* ●(Why) *are you so scared* ●*darn* (g.d.s.o.b. – see text)

Earhart's use of limits needs clarification. AE's sequence, *where are you going; we can't bail out. See*, suggests that Earhart is responding to what appears to be Noonan preparing to exit the aircraft by parachute. *We can't bail out* is a clear limitation to that, and *See* may be Earhart pointing out the land to challenge Noonan's apparent delusion of being airborne. Another possible limitation is, *Hey. Watch that battery*, as per Earhart possibly instructing Noonan to stay clear of the battery compartment in the floor just aft of cockpit. (Compartment could have been open to keep battery temperature down.) The last limit item, *stop*, may be Earhart ordering Noonan to stop his demands to exit the aircraft, or perhaps even to stop him from actually trying to leave.

The remaining intelligible words in the box appear to express the frustration of not hearing responses to her transmissions as well as anger and frustration with Noonan's disruptions. Betty revealed during the 2000 TIGHAR interview⁹ that while she wrote down the benign item *darn* for the record, what she actually heard (memory not confirmed) was *god damn son of a bitch*. If that is correct, then stress was obviously at a peak level during the radio session.

NOONAN'S APPARENT PURPOSES FOR SPEAKING

Noonan apparently spoke for the purpose of expressing his needs and distress (*oh* interpreted as pain expression). Noonan apparently spoke for the purpose of leaving the aircraft; he thrice demanded Earhart allow him to exit the aircraft.

expressing distress and needs: •*help help* •*I need air* •*Oh oh* •*oh* •*oh, oh, ouch.*

demanding permission to leave the aircraft: •*let me out of here* •*let me out* •*quick let me out.*

regarding abnormal topics: •*Marie Marie* •*Marie* •*Marie* •*Marie Hey!* •*Marie* •*take it away Howland* (newsman delusion). •The bailout delusion (see text). •*waters high.* •*waters knee deep.* (hallucinatory behavior).

Noonan's remaining words have no purposes because they appear to be the products of a deranged mind. To wit, it appears that Noonan sporadically called out (six total times) *Marie*, apparently his wife's name—Noonan's wife was Mary Bea, which Betty appears to have heard as Marie. It was delusional to think the woman could be reached on the radio. When Noonan speaks *waters high* and *waters knee deep*, the Gardner Island reef was in fact water free (at low tide),¹⁰ suggesting that Noonan's water perception was a hallucination. *Take it away Howland* might point to Noonan's delusion of being a newsman calling for a report from Howland Island, an interpretation offered by Gillespie (2006, 178). Lastly, Noonan seems to have said or done something suggestive of bailing out of the aircraft; appropriately, Earhart appears to have squelched that delusion with a reality boundary check by speaking, *we can't bail out. See [the land].*"

MICROPHONE MEMORY CONFIRMED

In 2000,¹¹ Betty described her memory of Earhart and Noonan struggling over possession of the radio microphone. While that negative interaction is an

important psychological event, it cannot be incorporated into the Earhart Project until Betty's long-term memory is empirically confirmed. Here is how that was achieved. Hypothesis: Were the microphone wrested away by Noonan, Earhart would have recovered it in order to continue sending the crucial distress calls. Confirmation of the recovery of the mic supports it being wrested away in the first place. Is there evidence that Earhart recovered the mic?

Over the course of the Notebook, Betty identified three items, each marking when Earhart had apparently taken back the microphone from Noonan. These AE *recovery items* are (crying now), Amelia Earhart, Amelia (red items in Table 1). What evidence supports these items being recovery items? Logically, a recovery item will be followed by an uninterrupted string of AE items because the mic was then (after recovery) in Earhart's control. Indeed, each AE recovery item in Table 1 is followed by a relatively long string of AE items. To the author's way of thinking, that finding confirms Betty's mic-struggling memory because recovery items are indicative of Earhart losing the mic in the first place, and assuredly she did not give up the instrument without a struggle.

The psychological importance of Betty's memory is that by taking the microphone away from Earhart by force, the manifestation of Noonan's abnormal condition had *escalated to the physical level*. Indeed, assuming Earhart resisted the mic being taken from her, then Noonan's behavior was blatantly aggressive in nature.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The author strove to increase the clarity of Betty's Notebook by identifying the purposes of the words that Betty transcribed. The finding is that Earhart apparently spoke for the purposes of ●being rescued, ●asking a favor (of George), ●managing Noonan's abnormal behaviors, and ●expressing negative emotions. Noonan's apparent words can be thought of as reflecting the possibility of an injury to the brain. He made sounds (oh) seemingly indicative to of ●pain, and his desire

to •exit the aircraft may have partly been to escape threatening waters that were hallucinatory in nature. Delusional thought abnormality is suggested by Noonan thinking •he could contact his wife; that he was a newsman; and that he could bailout.

Here is a smoothed, and of course hypothetical, summary of Betty's Notebook. Earhart initiates a radio session to send distress calls. During the session, the injured Noonan is agitated by the high ambient temperature and by hallucinations, some concerning water. Those experiences appear to motivate Noonan to exit the aircraft, and three times he demands that Earhart let him do so. But Earhart holds firm and refuses to end the radio session to shepherd Noonan across the dangerous reef--it would have been inhumane to let the injured Noonan exit alone. To keep the agitated Noonan behaviorally under control, Earhart establishes limits, and also distracts her navigator by engaging him in petty activities. Unfortunately, Noonan becomes focused on the radio microphone and violates Earhart's personal space to wrest the instrument away from her. That causes Earhart to struggle, apparently on at least three occasions, with Noonan to regain the instrument in order to continue the crucial distress calls.

This psychologist's conclusion from this study is not positive. There appears nothing in the Notebook about Noonan helping to solicit rescue elements; just the opposite, disrupting Earhart's distress calls surely made that job more difficult. Also, the "microphone" incident indicates that Noonan may have behaved disrespectfully and aggressively toward his employer. Indeed, if Betty's Notebook provides a reliable sample of Noonan's apparent post-loss behavior, then it is doubtful that Amelia Earhart had an amicable and helpful person with whom to face the life-and-death challenges on Nikumaroro Island.



appendix and endnotes, next pages

Appendix

For this researcher, the contextual purpose procedure did not evoke meaning for the following items. One reason may be that the erratic radio signal may not have provided information pertinent to serving as meaningful contexts for the items. **AE items:** your right; here I come - oh; It's going; airport; knee deep over; huh; are you here. **FN items:** stop-Amelia; speak; Uncle; Amelia take it; here I go--o; different suffer; Amelia things are; Amelia; Amelia-yes.

endnotes below

Endnotes

1. Bob Brandenburg and Ric Gillespie, "Catalog and Analysis of Radio Signals During the Search for Amelia Earhart in July 1937, records #81, 170," The Earhart Project,
<http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/ResearchPapers/Brandenburg/signalcatalog2.html> (accessed July 2016).
2. Betty's Notebook, Earhart Project,
<http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Notebook/notebook.html> (accessed July 2016).
3. Betty's Notebook, TIGHAR archives,
<https://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Documents/Notebook/notebook.html>. This site shows the speaker designations of AE, man (Betty did not know Noonan's name), and both. The latter refers to items where Betty did not differentiate the speakers. Using the contextual procedure on the "both" items (about 12 percent of the Notebook), the author was able to assign the AE or FN speakership and thus remove "both speakers" as a research variable.
4. Ric Gillespie, *Finding Amelia: The True Story of the Earhart Disappearance* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 175-184.
5. Ric Gillespie, TIGHAR forum,
<https://tighar.org/smf/index.php/topic,1153.0.html> (p. 5, reply #71, second paragraph). (accessed July 2016.)
6. "The Suitcase in My Closet," *TIGHAR Tracks* 19, no. 3 (2003),
http://tighar.org/Publications/TTracks/2003Vol_19/suitcase.pdf (accessed 30 July 2014).
7. Bob Brandenburg and Ric Gillespie, "Catalog and Analysis of Radio Signals During the Search for Amelia Earhart in July 1937, record #28," The Earhart Project,
<http://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Archives/Research/ResearchPapers/Brandenburg/signalcatalog2.html> (accessed July 2016).
8. The hypothesis regarding Noonan sustaining a traumatic brain injury needs to

9. Betty's Interview DVD,

https://tighar.org/store/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=92

(accessed July 2016).

10. Bob Brandenburg, "Time and Tide," *TIGHAR Tracks* 28 no. 1 (2013): 53.

11. Betty's Interview DVD,

https://tighar.org/store/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=92

(accessed July 2016).