

AMELIA FOUND?

BY TOM D. CROUCH



AMELIA EARHART

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by TOM D. CROUCH

AMERICAN HERITAGE | SUMMER 2012 | VOL. 62 | ISSUE 2

[http://www.americanheritage.com/
content/amelia-found?page=show](http://www.americanheritage.com/content/amelia-found?page=show)

Seventy-five years ago the "first lady of the air" vanished over the Pacific Ocean attempting to circumnavigate the globe. Today there may be renewed hope of solving the mystery.

At 9 A.M. on the morning of Tuesday March 20, 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stepped to a podium in the State Department's Benjamin Franklin Dining Room and addressed a roomful of reporters, federal officials, and a sprinkling of female military aviators. Behind her sat the Secretary of Transportation, the foreign minister of the nation of Kiribati, the CEO of Lockheed Martin, underwater explorer Robert Ballard, and Richard Gillespie, executive director of The Investigative Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR).

Secretary Clinton began by describing her youthful admiration for Amelia Earhart, "a woman who, when it was really hard, decided she was going to break all kinds of limits—social limits, gravity limits, distance limits. Nobody," the secretary explained, "was there to tell Amelia Earhart she couldn't do whatever she wanted."

And now, perhaps, the mystery of Amelia's disappearance during a 1937 attempt to fly around the world was close to being solved. TIGHAR was returning to a tiny coral spit in the western Pacific in search of her last resting place. "Even if you do not find what you seek," the secretary concluded, "there is great honor and possibility in the search itself."

Seventy-five years after she vanished, Amelia Mary Earhart remains our favorite missing person. Along with her friend Eleanor Roosevelt she is perhaps the best known American woman of the 20th

century. Hilary Swank, Amy Adams, Diane Keaton and Susan Clark have portrayed her in films. She continues to grace magazine covers, from *Air Classics* and *Air & Space Smithsonian* to *Marie Claire*. "Amelia Earhart, Even Better Than You Think," read the banner beneath her photo on the cover of *Ms.*, which offered a T-shirt iron-on of Amelia's portrait in that issue. When Apple issued a set of "Think Different" advertising posters in 1998, Amelia was the first of the iconic figures selected. Steve Jobs wrote the inspirational copy explaining why Earhart, as well as Einstein, Edison, John Lennon, Gandhi, and the Dalai Lama were chosen: "Because they change things. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward."

Amelia Earhart was less than a month from her 40th birthday when she and her navigator Fred Noonan disappeared somewhere over the western Pacific on July 2, 1937. She had catapulted to fame just nine years before, when she became the first woman to fly the Atlantic, making the trip with pilot Wilmer Stultz and mechanic Lou Gordon. In May 1932, she became the second aviator, and first woman, to solo the Atlantic, five years to the day after Lindbergh. She set one aerial record after another, climbing into the headlines and working hard to stay there.

Earhart used her celebrity on behalf of the causes in which she believed. She



Amelia Earhart's fame and good looks helped propel her career.

was a leading spokesperson for American commercial aviation. In 1935 Amelia accepted the invitation of Purdue University to join the faculty as a career counselor for young women, an assignment close to her heart. As a teenager, she had kept a scrapbook filled with clippings about women achievers. Once she had the public ear, she spoke out in favor of equal rights for women at every opportunity. Amelia helped to establish Zonta International, an organization for professional women, and the Ninety-Nines, a society for women involved in aviation.

A genuine progressive, Amelia supported political causes in which she believed. She signed a petition from the American Women's Committee for the Recognition of the Soviet Union, and announced her support for a campaign by the Women's Committee for Peace and Freedom to cut military spending in favor of increased appropriations to assist the unemployed. A committed pacifist, Amelia nevertheless argued that women should be drafted. She said it was the only way that the sensible half of the population would get some notion of what war was like and put a stop to the whole thing.

Fame came at a price. In order to maintain her status, there was always

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— Continued —

another flight. By 1935 she was in search of a new challenge and a new airplane to meet it. That fall, Purdue University agreed to supply its new faculty member with \$80,000 for a “flying laboratory.” Her husband, promoter George Putnam, managed the acquisition of a twin-engine Lockheed Model 10E Special, a modified version of the ten-passenger Electra that the firm was marketing to the airlines. Fitted with long distance tanks, twin Pratt & Whitney Wasp engines, and a host of special equipment provided by leading aviation manufacturers, Amelia’s new craft was ready for whatever she had in mind.

What she had in mind was a flight around the world at the equator. Her first attempt ended with a ground loop on take-off from Wheeler Field, Honolulu. Amelia and her navigator, Fred Noonan, took off on the second attempt from Miami on June 1, 1937, bound for San Juan, Puerto Rico, on the first leg of their long flight. Over the next month the pair flew across the

south Atlantic and Africa, along the foot of the Arabian Peninsula, down through south and southeast Asia to Australia and on to a landing at the isolated port of Lae, New Guinea, on June 29. Three days later, at 10 a.m. on July 2, 1937, the Electra rolled down the dirt runway with 1,100 gallons of fuel onboard and flew off toward tiny Howland Island, 2,556 miles away.

At 2:45 a.m. on July 2, radio operators across the International Date Line on the Itasca, the Coast Guard cutter sent to guide Earhart to safe landing on the island, heard Amelia for the first time. At 6:14 a.m. she announced that they were 200 miles out. At 6:41 she asked the Itasca to take a bearing on her signal and radio a position. An hour later, a worried Amelia radioed that she had not heard anything from the ship. “I must be on you, but cannot see you,” she reported, adding that “gas is running low.”

The radiomen at Howland were receiving a strong signal from Amelia, but she could not hear them.

At 8 a.m. Amelia reported that she had finally heard the Itasca, but could not hone in on the signal. Forty-three minutes later, twenty hours and thirteen minutes after lifting off from the runway at Lae, she was back on the air, announcing that they were flying on a compass line of 157 to 337 degrees, searching for Howland. Then there was silence. Earhart and Noonan had vanished.

The government launched the most extensive search ever undertaken for a single aircraft. For 16 days, 10 vessels, 4,000 crewmen, and 65 aircraft searched an area of the Pacific roughly the size of Texas without turning up a single clue.

What had gone wrong? There is no evidence to suggest that Noonan’s navigation was at fault. The real problem

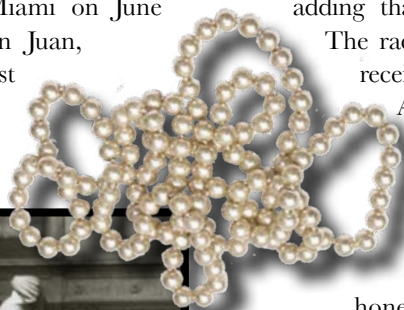
was poor communications planning including misunderstandings relating to the times and frequencies when Amelia would transmit and receive. They were confident that they were close to the island, but without being able to take a radio fix on the Itasca, they had no idea which direction to fly. This time, Amelia had taken one risk too many.

She was gone, but not forgotten. Within four months conspiracy theorists were accusing the U.S. government of using Earhart’s disappearance as an excuse to over-fly the Japanese-mandated Marshall Islands in search of forbidden military installations. The release of an RKO picture, “Flight to Freedom,” in April 1943, popularized the “Amelia the spy” theory. A pair of biographies published in 1960 cited native testimony to suggest that Earhart and Noonan had been captured by the Japanese and held on Saipan. Even more bizarre theories allowed Amelia to survive. One writer suggested she wound up as one of several “Tokyo Rose” broadcasters.

What are we to make of all the conspiracy theories? Is there a small flame of truth flickering somewhere beneath all that smoke? Most likely not. In three-quarters of a century of looking, no researcher has produced a shred of hard evidence to suggest that Earhart and Noonan were either spies or prisoners of the Japanese.

By the late 1980s, while conspiracy theorists continued to churn out books, public interest in the disappearance of Amelia Earhart was on the wane. Then came TIGHAR, The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery. The story begins in 1984, when Ric Gillespie, a charter pilot and aviation accident investigator, launched a search for L’Oiseau Blanc, the biplane in which French aviators Charles Nungesser and François Coli disappeared during a 1927 attempt to fly the Atlantic.

It was generally assumed that the pair had crashed into the ocean. On the basis of a magazine article suggesting



Amelia in 1928 after flying across the Atlantic Ocean with fellow pilot Wilmer Stultz (left) and Mechanic Louis Gordon.

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— *Continued* —

that a fisherman heard the aircraft fly over a remote section of the Maine woods on that day in 1927, however, Gillespie organized an initial reconnaissance of the area. Discovering that enthusiasts were eager to join the search, he established TIGHAR, a nonprofit foundation, in 1985. Twenty-three years and 20 TIGHAR expeditions later, Nungesser and Coli are as lost as ever.

Gillespie envisioned an organization that would do a good deal more than search for missing flying machines. He would promote the highest standards of historic aircraft preservation, staging international symposia in the field in cooperation with museums, and offering classes and field experience for those interested in “aviation archaeology,” the responsible investigation of historic aircraft crash sites. That said, it was the Indiana Jones factor that attracted members, funds, and public attention. There was the allure of participating in the solution of a fascinating historical mystery, including the possibility, if you could afford it, of an adventurous journey to a remote archaeological site in search of aviation’s Holy Grail—incontrovertible evidence of Amelia Earhart.

In 1988 two TIGHAR recruits approached Gillespie with an intriguing proposal, arguing that Earhart and Noonan, having missed Howland Island, might have decided to aim for the British-controlled South Phoenix Islands 350 miles to the southeast. The notion was not a new one. In the wake of the disappearance, the direction-finding radio stations of Pan American and World Airways located at Hawaii, Wake, and Midway Islands had picked up faint, indecipherable signals that seemed to be coming from the Phoenix Islands. Could the lost aviators have landed



Earhart poses with one of her early steeds in 1936, less than a year before her disappearance.

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there and broadcast until their batteries died? Dispatched from Pearl Harbor to participate in the search, the USS Colorado steamed directly to the Phoenix group and employed its three catapult-launched Vought O3U-3 Corsair floatplanes to reconnoiter the major atolls making up the group. If Amelia and Fred were there, the aviators did not see them.

By the fall of 1988, Gillespie had amassed \$250,000 in donations, much of it from participants, to finance the first TIGHAR expedition to the tiny island of Nikumaroro, which he believes is the likeliest site for the lost aviators. Twenty-four years and nine expeditions later, Gillespie is still looking. Funding an active program of exploration is expensive. Some support came from the media over the years. The Discovery Channel is reported to have paid \$50,000 in 1997 to make a one-hour documentary about one of the trips to the island. A three-person documentary crew from ABC-TV accompanied another trip. Then there was a splashy article in *Life* magazine. One trip, which included a contract with a firm that conducted sea-bottom searches, cost \$483,000. A week before the scheduled departure, the TIGHAR treasury was

still \$200,000 short. At the last minute wealthy supporters offered no-interest, unsecured loans to close the gap.

It cost Mike Kammerer, founder of the Independent Television Network, \$300,000 to purchase media rights to an expedition planned for the fall of 2001. That August, internet sources indicated that an Australian salvage company planned a trip to the island to search a suspected area before TIGHAR arrived. Outraged, Kammerer announced that he would parachute onto “Niku,” accompanied by a film crew and a former Miss World,

who would function as “spokesmodel.” Together, they could respond to questions from the media and defend the island against the interlopers. Commenting on his patron’s scheme, Gillespie remarked: “The phrase ‘loose cannon on a rolling deck’ comes to mind.” Fortunately for all concerned, the Australian expedition was cancelled.

It requires a good deal of hype to keep a project like this alive. That is not a problem for Gillespie, as he demonstrated at a 1992 Washington, D.C., press conference. Referring to a half-dozen assorted objects discovered on the island, he argued that the “proof here is apparent for any rational person who looks at it. Present the same evidence to any dispassionate observer, and they will reach the same conclusion. The case is solved.” Others disagreed. Bill Prymak, President of the Amelia Earhart Society, suggested that Gillespie’s finds amounted to “a garbage bag full of nothing.”

As Ric Gillespie notes, “TIGHAR’s case rests on the artifacts found on Nikumaroro.” So, what have they found? A 1996 TIGHAR report documented just 16 artifacts, of which 12 are bits and pieces of assorted aircraft. Nine of those

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— Continued —

objects are either anonymous strands of wire, or are clearly from airplanes other than Amelia's. TIGHAR claimed that three pieces of aluminum might have come from an aircraft like the Electra, or maybe not. In the end, the group's strongest piece of aircraft evidence is a single oddly shaped section of aluminum skin. "There is only one possible conclusion," Gillespie announced when he unveiled the bent aluminum at the 1992 news conference, "We have found a piece of Amelia Earhart's aircraft." The organization admits that this piece of aluminum is thinner than that used in the construction of the Electra. A comparison of the rivet pattern and other characteristics, however, led TIGHAR to conclude that it might have been a patch used by Lockheed workmen to repair damage to the underside of the fuselage following the Honolulu accident.

Elgin Long, a veteran aviator and Earhart researcher with years of flying experience in the Pacific, wasn't buying. When Gillespie asked for his opinion on the object, Long recruited a team of experts on the Lockheed Electra, including engineers and workmen who helped to build Earhart's airplane and were involved in the repairs. They researched the original records, went

over drawings and, with a transparent plastic template in hand, surveyed other surviving Lockheed 10s. "We decided," Long declared, "the fragment could have come from anywhere ... anywhere but Amelia Earhart's airplane."

Then there are the bones. TIGHAR researchers discovered that 11 human bones were found on the island in 1940, along with a sextant case and parts of a shoe, all of which were forwarded to administrative headquarters at Fiji. The first medical officer to examine the bones pronounced them to be the remains of a Polynesian male. A physician at a medical school on Fiji decided that they were the remains of a "short, stocky European or even half-caste" male.

The bones and other items have long since disappeared, but some measurements of the remains and the medical reports have been preserved. Employing a modern computer program, two contemporary physical anthropologists report that the measurements are "more likely female than male," and "more likely white than Polynesian or other Pacific Islander." The scientists freely admit, however, that the measurements were "taken over 55 years ago by a now-deceased

individual of unknown expertise, with no description of the methods or assumptions employed." In the end, they conclude: "It is ... impossible to know whether the bones ... were in fact those of a white female."

Perhaps TIGHAR's strongest pieces of evidence are to be found in a collection of nonaircraft relics discovered on Nikumaroro over the years—a thermometer, parts of patent medicine bottles, a broken pocketknife, and other small items. Special attention has been focused on the left sole, heel, and assorted bits of what they insisted was a size nine woman's oxford of the sort Amelia wore during the flight. In fact, the initial reports from the shoe manufacturer suggested that it was either for a large woman's foot, or a small man's. William Foshag Jr., president of the company that manufactured the Cat's Paw heel, described it as a unisex item, noting that "it could, have been on a man's shoe." Unfortunately for the "Amelia's shoe" hypothesis, Earhart wore size six shoes, a fact confirmed by her sister, and by two surviving pairs of her shoes. Undeterred, TIGHAR measured Amelia's foot as seen in a photograph, determining that she wore size 8½-to-9 shoes.

The list of odds and ends of American and European manufactured goods collected on the island continues to grow with each expedition. Press releases describing such objects have been distributed at critical moments to keep the TIGHAR effort alive in the media, generating continued public interest. The latest revelation in May 2012 described fragments of what appears to have been a jar of Dr. Berry's Freckle Ointment, an American cosmetic. TIGHAR suggests that while none of these



The map to the left shows the times based on the location of the USCGC Itasca. The red line shows the probable flight path that Amelia took when she disappeared and the dotted line was the direct flight path she should have taken to reach the USCGC Itasca to refuel.

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— *Continued* —

items can be directly connected to Earhart and Noonan, their presence on this remote atoll is convincing circumstantial evidence. Consider that the island, four nautical miles long and a mile-and-a-half across at the widest point, was continuously occupied by Gilbertese natives from 1936 into the 1960s. During World War II the population of the island was supplemented by U.S. Coast Guardsmen manning a Loran navigation station. During the peak years, as many as 200 people were living on the island. We know that number included many women, and at least a few Europeans and one American. That's a lot of people who could lose or discard the items in question, or run across evidence of the presence of Earhart and Noonan, if there was anything to be found.

But there always seems to be new evidence to keep the hypothesis alive. Early in 2012 a TIGHAR photo analyst determined that the object protruding

from the water in a 1937 photo of the lagoon could be the landing gear strut of a Lockheed 10E. The State Department, which had worked with TIGHAR over the years to arrange permission for the repeated searches, was impressed. With Secretary Clinton's blessing, Gillespie and his team will set off on their tenth expedition to "Niku" in early July. Perhaps the new expedition will uncover hard evidence, the proverbial smoking gun, and prove TIGHAR's case at long last.

Gillespie and company now face serious competition. For most researchers, the possibility that the aviators went down at sea is still the best bet. If so, the chance of finding them has always seemed remote. In March and April 2002 and again in 2006, Nauticos, a deep-ocean search firm, set out on a 1.5-million-dollar sonar survey of the ocean bottom in the general neighborhood of Howland and Baker Islands, looking for

the Electra—17,000 feet down. The group selected a search area based on Elgin Long's research. They had swept about 630 square miles of seabed, two-thirds of their target area, when technical problems forced them to return to port. Like TIGHAR, they are raising money to complete the job and check ocean-floor anomalies discovered during the first expedition.

Only time will tell if the last resting place of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan will ever be discovered. As for me, I am by no means sure that I want any of the searches to succeed. For seven decades, the mystery of Amelia's death has fueled renewed interest in her purposeful life.

I would prefer to leave her where she is, and reflect on the 1939 eulogy in song offered by "Red River" Dave McEnery:

*There's a beautiful, beautiful field
Far away in a land that is fair.*

Happy landings to you Amelia Earhart ■



Amelia Earhart and the Lockheed Electra 10E NR 16020, the plane she chose to fly across the world with.

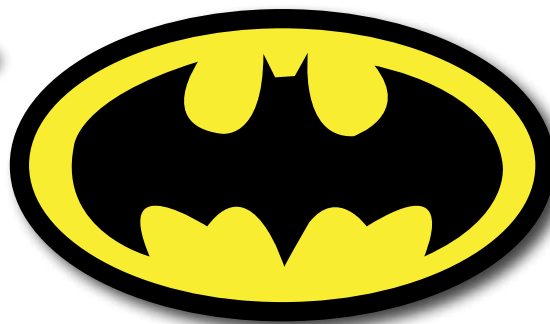
AMELIA FOUND?

SUPER HEROES: A MODERN MYTHOLOGY (EXCERPT, PAGE 18)

BY RICHARD REYNOLDS

http://books.google.com/books?id=Rrx-5cn1F8oC&pg=PA18&lpg=PA18&dq=emergence+of+super+heroes+great+depression&source=bl&ots=s_6epLvB9S&sig=sM74vC3wjY4qC-mb_EXeqgP1-jk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=3wvLUZj7GYHA4AP-rIHACw&ved=0CE4Q6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=emergence%20of%20super%20heroes%20great%20depression&f=false

Superman and the superhero emerged at the end of the Great Depression and rung the run-up to the outbreak of the European war. Millions of Americans had experienced poverty and unemployment, millions more had had their faith in the notion of uninterrupted economic progress seriously undermined. Avenging ‘Lone Wolf’ heroes abounded in popular narrative of the 1930s and ‘40s on both sides of the Atlantic: from Doc Savage to Philip Marlowe, from Hannay in Hitchcock’s 39 Steps to the Green Hornet, from Rick Blaine in Casablanca to Captain Midnight of the radio serials. A new kind of popular hero had emerged: the self-reliant individualist who stand aloof from many of the humdrum concerns of society, yet is able to operate according to his own code of honour, to take on the world on his own terms, and win. For Americans, the historical path from Munich to Pearl Harbor coincides with the emergence of Superman and Captain America—solitary but socialized heroes, who engage in battle from time to time as proxies of the US foreign policy. A darker side of the Lone Wolf hero is embodied by Batman, a hero whose motivations and emotions are turned inward against the evils within society, and even the casual psychological roots of crime itself. The tension between these two veins in the superhero tradition remains to the present day. ■



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SIGNED PHOTOGRAPH OF AMELIA EARHART

<http://airandspace.si.edu/webimages/highres/78-16945h.jpg>



This photograph was signed by Amelia Earhart's mother in 1940, 3 years after her disappearance.

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LETTER TO DR. WIGGAM, CIRCA 1932

<http://earchives.lib.purdue.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/earhart&CISOPTR=2515&REC=12>

Dear Dr. Wiggam:

I venture this letter because you wear D. Se. after your name. Those letters imply an open mind and intellectual honesty besides mere knowledge.

After that beginning you can guess I am about to question one of your very interestingly written "Let's-Explore-Your-Mind" opinions. I saw the answer referred to some time ago, but the issue raised is still a burning one, so I take pen in hand at this late date.

You inquire " Do you think women should be allowed to pilot passenger planes?" your answer says "I do not think all women should be eliminated, but I think our experience with women automobile drivers proves beyond doubt that it would be simply ghastly folly to trust the average woman to pilot an airplane."

My comment on that statement is that it would be just as true if you substituted man for woman. You realize pilots, male and female, undergo the same physical examinations, and the same flying and written tests to obtain similar licenses. Pilots are a selected group and while normal, are not average. I feel the implications in your statement is that average men would be safe but average women would not-and with that I cannot agree.

Second, you say "The best studies we have show that women, given the same type of machines as men and driving in all sorts of weather, have over twice as many accidents as men and the accidents cost twice as much." In this you overlook differentiation in regard to training and experience. If one is comparing basic abilities one must consider all factors. Your statistics may be true but the implication may not be, i.e., that women are less skillful than men given the same opportunities.

To compare fairly one should add "women of equal training, experience and freedom from the sense of inferiority, tradition has bred into them." I might guess that men making pies would ruin twice as many as women. However, I should not offer that as proof that men were fundamentally incapable under similar laboratory conditions of making pies as well as women.

I realize you are giving facts as they are tabulated today. What I object to is that your conclusion is not justified by these facts and is therefore not D. Se. "Women should be vastly more highly selected than men and subjected to much longer training, both for automobile and airplane piloting." Do you mean selected for training or selected today from those who already drive cars? If the former, out of 10,000 men and 10,000 women selected from as similar groups as possible, probably more women would be passed as normal than men, i.e. could be counted

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LETTER TO DR. WIGGAM, CIRCA 1932

— *Continued* —

on as good driver or pilot material. Biological literature shows that female numerically truer to the normal than males.

If the latter, then probably you are right as there are certainly fewer good women drivers than men-but there are also numerically fewer women who drive at all. So where are we? Is not the point really whether the proportion of good drivers among women (considering the total and the other factors I have mentioned) is greater or less or equal to that of men? To illustrate take the situation in regard to pilots. There are roughly 15,000 pilots, exclusive of the army and navy, in this country. Of that total 410 are women. 71 of these, or about 17%, hold the transport rating. Of the men about 600 are airline chief pilots or a proportion of 600/14500, roughly 4%. On that basis one should be able to draw 16 pilots, from among the ranks of women flyers capable of holding airline jobs. However, if such number were not available it might not be because women were as a whole less competent than men. For there are proportionately fewer women holding the higher licenses. That is, there are considerably more than 17% of the 14,500 male pilots transport licenses. This differentiation is due to many known causes such as a larger proportion of sportsmen flyers among women, greater difficulty is obtaining adequate instruction for women, fewer opportunities to earn while learning, plus the crushing barrier of tradition noted before. There may be unknown causes, too, I grant, but these should not be wielded as ghostly weapons in a scientific inquiry.

I have long been interested in comparative skills between the sexes. I have watched the flawless coordination of women champion divers and I have watched the control and precision of women factory hands as they do work no man does (whether this should be "can do" or not, I do not know) and I wonder why the creatures who can with training perform these diverse tasks, and a hundred others, so excellently, should be balked by a contraption with an engine and four wheels or one with an engine and a couple of wings.

Can it be that conclusions have been based on unscientific premises? I think so definitely. The medical profession is one of the greatest sinners, in this respect. Concerning women pilots they have made the most extraordinary pronouncements, repeating conclusions from pathology and from musty volumes of the past, when a woman was likely to have almost any time a "fit of the vapours". Far too many M.D.s unconsciously contrive to think of women today as the same creatures with only the terminology of her frailties altered.

To protest their licenses a group of women flyers have volunteered to undergo any physical reaction tests examiners wish over a period of time, provided those tests are scientifically carried out with men controls. So far none have been made so difficult is it for women to gain a hearing as sample guinea pigs.

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LETTER TO DR. WIGGAM, CIRCA 1932

— *Continued* —

The most thorough tests of comparative skills (those carried out at Purdue and Columbia Universities) show no differentiation whatsoever between men's and women's fluctuation curves. Human beings differ from day to day in mental and muscular control but so far, the female, contrary to what commonly supposed, does not vary at one time more than the male. Is not this the crux of criticism of women's abilities?

Does your article not imply some unnamed mysterious weakness possibly based on this? Nerves, glands, whatnot? An inherent never-to-be overcome lack.

I have written this book in order to ask that you do not have unnecessary boulders at women who are struggling against such heavy odds now. I think where an answer concerning them is left with the implications of the one which is disturbing me, you do so. Please help us with your knowledge and know thousands will be grateful even though they do not put words together to tell you so as I have done.

Amelia Earhart



Amelia Earhart with
President Hoover in 1932,
the same year she wrote
this letter.

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EARHART AND HER LOCKHEED ELECTRA “FLYING LABORATORY.”

<http://searchforamelia.org/lockheed-electra>



Amelia Earhart's Electra, designated NR16020, was a modified Lockheed Model 10E with a range of more than 4,000 miles, a cruising speed of approximately 190 miles per hour, and a maximum ceiling pushing over 19,400 feet above sea level. Earhart had numerous modifications made to her 10E to maximize it for long-distance flights. She added more fuel tanks for a total of six in the wings and six in the fuselage, increasing the total carrying capacity to 1,150 gallons of fuel. She also modified the electronic equipment, adding a Western Electric radio and a Bendix radio direction finder—cutting-edge technology at the time. These numerous modifications made Earhart's Electra a one-of-a-kind aircraft.

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P.V.H. WEEMS' LETTER TO AMELIA EARHART

<http://airandspace.si.edu/explore-and-learn/multimedia/detail.cfm?id=4518>

May 14, 1937

Miss Amelia Earhart:
c/o G.P. Putnam
2 W. 45th st. New York, N.Y.

Weems wrote this letter to Earhart after her near-disastrous takeoff attempt in Hawaii in 1937. Extra navigation training may not have kept Earhart from disaster, but it might have allowed to her appreciate shortcomings in planning an equipment.

Dear Mis Earhart:-

In case you could find time to come to Annapolis for a few weeks intensive work in celestial navigation, I believe you would be well re-paid for the efforts. I have just had Miss Amy Johnson here for two weeks. She did beautiful work and seems to be more than pleased with the results.

As I see the picture, both of you ladies are in the flying game as your life-time work. Aside from piloting, about which there is no question of your both having a great deal of ability, the only important contribution you can make to a flight is the ability to see the direct course as not to miss the objective.

As both of you know a great deal about dead-reckoning and radio, I recommend that you make a special effort to perfect yourself, not only in radio including the morse code, but also in celestial navigation, since radio and celestial navigation afford the only means for fixing your position above the clouds or over the water. I believe that within two or three weeks work in celestial navigation and perhaps two or three months serious work with radio, you would be in a class almost by yourself. So far as I know Lindbergh, Hagenberger and perhaps one or two others are the only ones I could name who are qualified in dead-reckoning, radio and celestial navigation in addition to being crack flyers.

I further believe you would save a great deal of expense and perhaps worry by practicing until you could lay out your own charts and do your own navigation all the way through. You can then take any reasonably dependable co-pilot with you and be sure of hitting your objective. In addition it would give you a great deal more confidence and you could keep your plans more confidential and necessary.

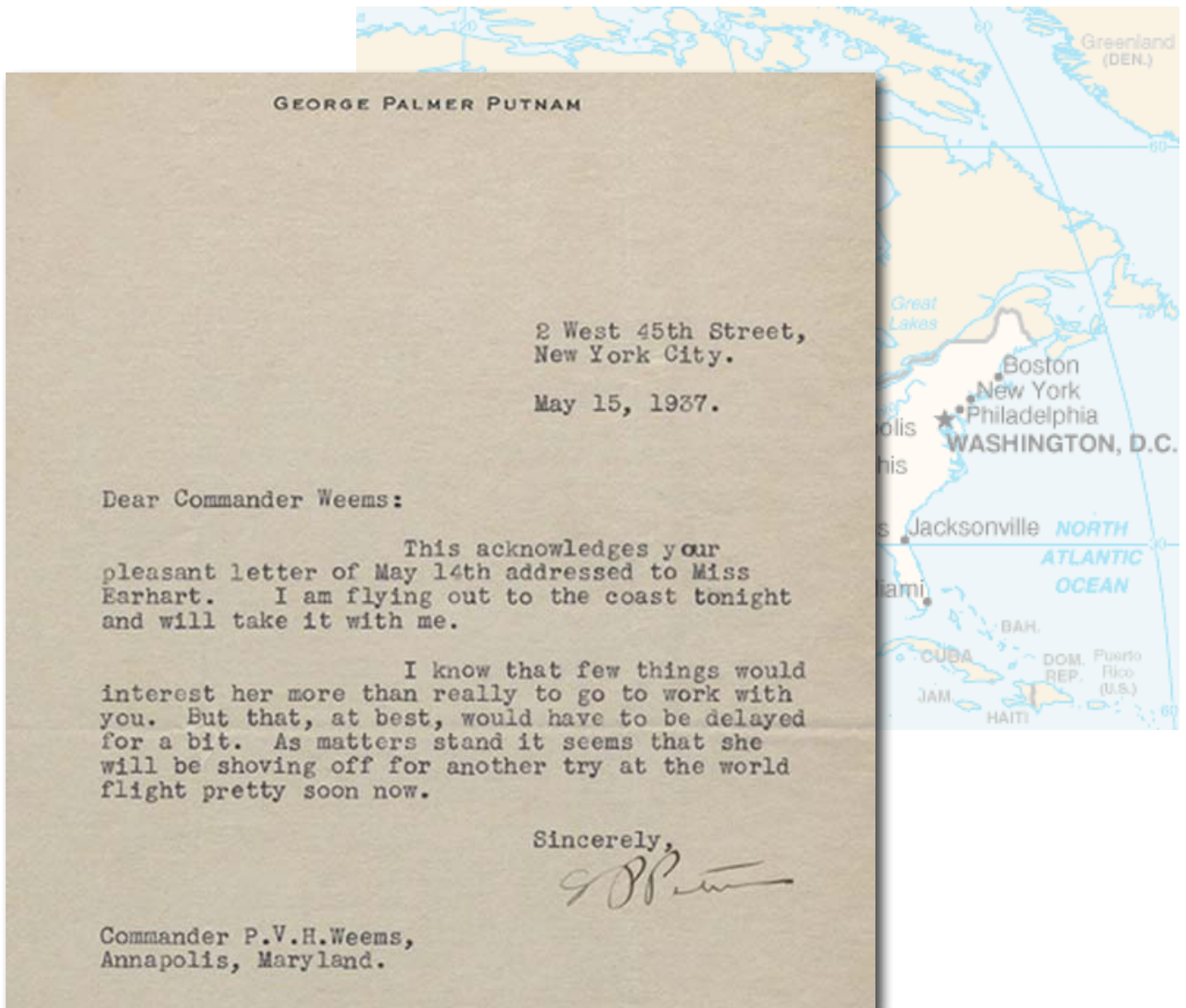
If you could possibly come to Annapolis, we can assure you that you will find the conditions here most congenial, as you already know many people here, and of the best facilities of working quietly and peacefully as many hours a day as you can stand. Please be assured we stand ready to cooperate with you in any way possible and that we wish you very best luck in the world.

Yours sincerely,
P. V. H. Weems.

AMELIA FOUND?

GEORGE PUTNAM'S RESPONSE TO COMMANDER WEEMS

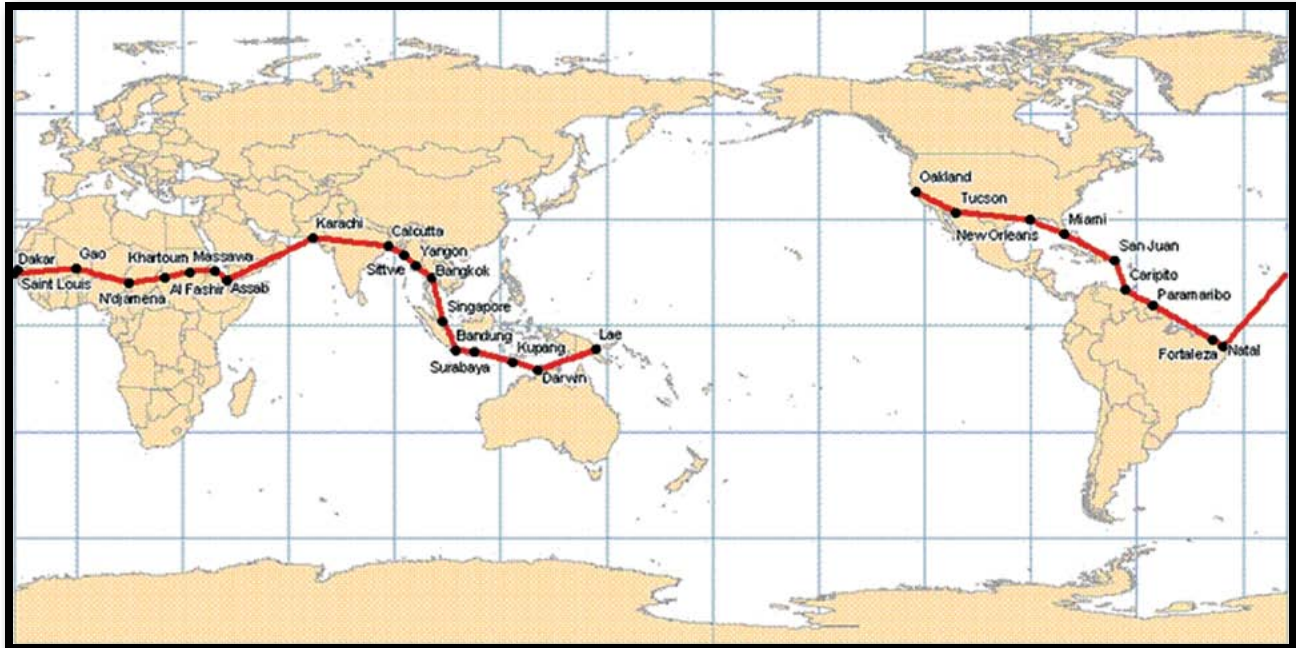
<http://blog.nasm.si.edu/aviation/amelia-earhart-and-the-profession-of-air-navigation/>



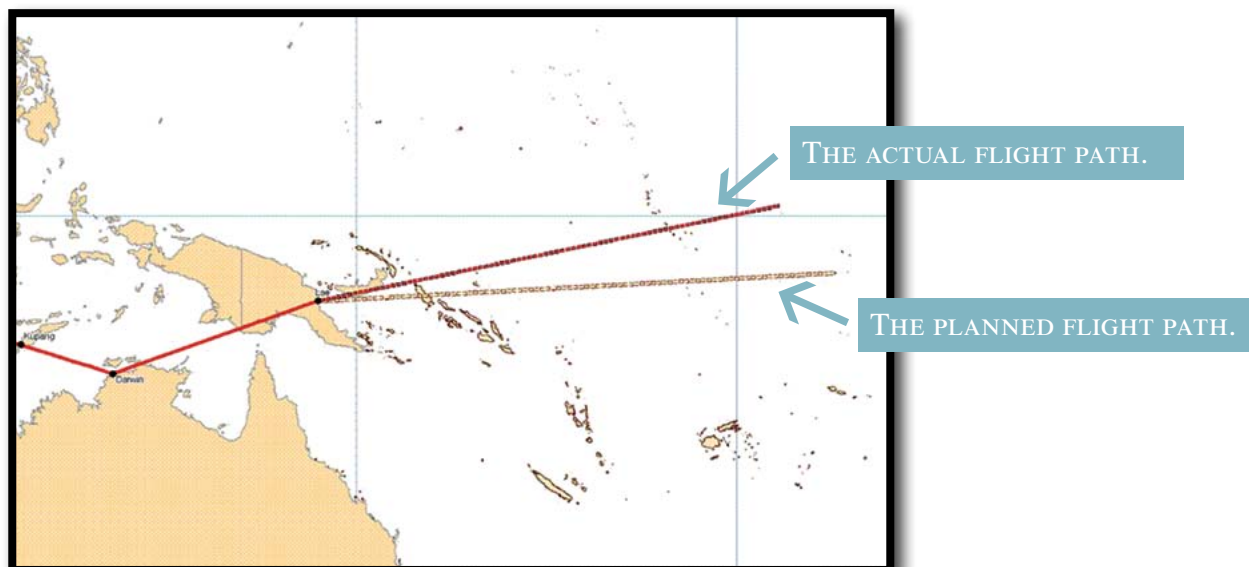
AMELIA FOUND?

MAP OF AMELIA EARHART'S FINAL FLIGHT PATH

<http://www.unm.edu/~asc03/assignment1.htm>



Earhart's flight started in Oakland, California and made it all the way to Darwin, Australia. She was only 3 stops away from returning to Oakland when she disappeared.



Earhart and Noonan are thought to have been 770 kilometers off course when they crashed.

AMELIA FOUND?

MISS EARHART FORCED DOWN AT SEA, HOWLAND ISLE FEARS; COAST GUARD BEGINS SEARCH

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0702.html>



MISS EARHART FORCED DOWN AT SEA, HOWLAND ISLE FEARS; COAST GUARD BEGINS SEARCH

FUEL HAD RUN LOW

FLIERS WERE NEAR GOAL WHEN LAST
REPORTED BUT SAW NO LAND

PLANE EQUIPPED TO FLOAT

HAS SEALED GASOLINE TANKS AND A
RUBBER LIFEBOAT FOR EMERGENCY AT SEA

RADIO BELIEVED HEARD

LOS ANGELES AMATEURS PICK UP WEAK SIGNALS
ON FREQUENCY ASSIGNED TO THE PLANE

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, July 2.—Coast Guard headquarters was advised tonight that Amelia Earhart was believed to have alighted on the Pacific Ocean near Howland Island shortly after 5 P.M. Eastern daylight time today.

A message from the cutter Itasca, stationed in the vicinity of the island in the mid-Pacific, said:

"Earhart unreported at Howland at 7 P.M. [E.D.T.]. Believe down shortly after 5 P.M. Am searching probable area and will continue."

Admiral William D. Leahy, chief of naval operations, instructed the commandant of the naval station at Honolulu tonight to render whatever aid he may deem practicable in the search for Miss Earhart.

Plane Joins in Search

[A navy flying boat hopped off from

Honolulu late last night for Howland Island, 1,900 miles distant, to join the cutter Itasca in hunting for Miss Earhart, The Associated Press reported. Two Los Angeles radio amateurs were said to have picked up weak signals on the frequency assigned to the Earhart radio.]

Coast Guard headquarters here received information that Miss Earhart probably overshot tiny Howland Island because she was blinded by the glare of an ascending sun. The message from the Coast Guard cutter Itasca said it was believed Miss Earhart passed northwest of Howland Island about 3:20 P.M. [E.D.T.], or about 8 A.M., Howland Island time. The Itasca reported that heavy smoke was bellowing from its funnels at the time, to serve as a signal for the flyer. The cutter's skipper expressed belief the Earhart plane had descended into the

sea within 100 miles of Howland.

Husband Asks Assistance

In a message to Washington, the flier's husband, George Palmer Putnam, who is awaiting her return to this country at the Oakland, Calif., airport said:

"Technicians familiar with Miss Earhart's plane believe, with its large tanks, it can float almost indefinitely. With retractable landing gear and smooth seas, safe landing (on the sea) should have been practicable.

"Request such assistance as is practicable from naval aircraft and surface craft stationed at Honolulu. Apparently plane's position not far from Howland.

"The plane's large wing and empty gasoline tanks should provide sufficient buoyancy if it came to rest on the sea without being damaged.

"There was a two-man rubber lifeboat

AMELIA FOUND?

MISS EARHART FORCED DOWN AT SEA, HOWLAND ISLE FEARS; COAST GUARD BEGINS SEARCH

— *Continued* —

aboard the plane, together with lifebelts, flares, a Very pistol and a large yellow signal kite which could be flown above the plane or the liferaft."

Mr. Putnam said his wife had planned to take emergency food rations and plenty of water on the hazardous flight, the most dangerous on her trip around the world.

Earlier the Coast Guard had ordered the cutter Roger B. Taney to proceed from Honolulu to Howland Island to aid the cutter Itasca in the search for Miss Earhart. A message from Honolulu, however, said the Taney was undergoing repairs and could not participate.

Amateurs Pick Up Signals

Los Angeles, July 2 (AP) -- Two amateur radio operators claimed to have picked up signals tonight on frequencies officially assigned to the plane of Amelia Earhart.

Walter McMenemy said he picked up weak signals on 6210 kilocycles at 6 P.M. [10 P.M. Eastern daylight time] and heard the letters "L-a-t" which he took to mean latitude. The letters were followed by undecipherable figures.

The signals continued for some time. Mr. McMenemy expressed belief they came from a portable transmitter. he received other signals from a Coast Guard boat, presumably the cutter Itasca, requesting listeners to "stand by and listen on all frequencies."

At 8 P.M. [midnight Eastern daylight time], Carl Pierson, chief engineer of the Patterson Radio Corporation, picked up similarly weak signals on 3,105 kilocycles, Miss Earhart's daytime frequency. He said they were erratic and undecipherable.

Both Mr. McMenemy and Mr. Pierson said the signals came from a hand-cranked



Earhart in the cockpit of her Electra in 1936.

generator. Miss Earhart carried one in her plane.

Within 100 Miles of Goals

Honolulu July 2 (AP) -- Amelia Earhart, the world's best known aviatrix, and her navigator, Fred Noonan, were believed forced down at sea today in their \$80,000 "flying laboratory" somewhere near tiny Howland Island on a daring attempt to span the South Pacific.

Apparently headwinds had exhausted their gasoline within 100 miles of the end of a projected 2,556-mile flight from Lae, New Guinea.

The alarming silence of the plane's radio spurred into search the Coast Guard cutter Itasca from Howland Island when Miss Earhart's estimated gasoline deadline of 8 P.M. [E.D.T.] passed without word.

A message from the globe-girdling plane, the time of which was translated at Washington by Coast Guard headquarters as 3:20 P.M. [E.D.T.] said she had only a half hour's gasoline and had not sighted land. A later incomplete message was reported

at 4:43 P.M. [E.D.T.] Earlier at 2:46 P.M. [E.D.T.] the plane was approximately 100 miles from the island.

The cutter Itasca set out at 8:30 P.M. [E.D.T.] to hunt the missing plane. Coast guardsmen here expressed the belief that aviation's "first lady" and her companion had overshot the minute island and come down somewhere in the vast mid-Pacific region far removed from regular shipping lanes. The cutter prepared to search the little known area northwest of Howland Island.

Bound around the world on an equatorial trail of more than 27,000 miles, Miss Earhart had flown since May 21 from Oakland, Calif., in relatively leisurely stages.

Arriving at Lae, New Guinea, June 28 she awaited favorable weather for the attempt to negotiate the unflown miles to Howland Island, the dot of land that represents the United States' frontier in the South Pacific and is regarded as a potential stepping stone on an air line between the Pacific Coast and the Antipodes.

She left Lae at 10 A.M. local time July 2, which was 8 P.M. yesterday, Eastern daylight time, expecting to complete the flight in eighteen or twenty hours.

The navy tug Ontario stood by halfway between New Guinea and Howland Island, but was not heard from. The Itasca, waiting to receive Miss Earhart at the island received only the barest reports of her progress until the message came that her fuel was about gone.

The next nearest land to Howland is Jarvis Island, a similar mid-Pacific dot forty miles north. Aside from these virtual sandbars there is nothing but water for hundreds of miles.

Howland Island is many hours behind

AMELIA FOUND?

MISS EARHART FORCED DOWN AT SEA, HOWLAND ISLE FEARS; COAST GUARD BEGINS SEARCH

— *Continued* —

Eastern time, and daylight still existed there with a smooth sea and good visibility prevailing.

The Coast Guard reported receipt of the following message from the Itasca:

"Earhart contact at 3:30 P.M. [E.D.T.]; reported half hour fuel and no landfall. Position doubtful.

"Contact 2:46 P.M. [E.D.T.]; reported approximately 100 miles from Itasca, but no relative bearing. Sea is smooth, visibility perfect, ceiling unlimited. Understand she will float for limited time."

Coast Guard officers consulted the army commanders in Honolulu concerning the possibility of sending land or sea planes from Honolulu, but officials said this was unlikely.

Officers aboard the cutter reported they estimated 8 P.M. [E.D.T.] was the latest the plane could stay aloft and that if it had not arrived by then search would be started in the northwest quadrant from Howland Island "as the most probable area."

Headquarters officials said they could not understand the discrepancy between Miss Earhart's report that she had only a half

hour's fuel and the Itasca estimate that she could remain in the air until 7 P.M. They added, however, that the Itasca officers might have taken into account a reserve fuel supply aboard the plane.

Information was sought concerning the sea, whether it was smooth enough to aid the fliers in keeping afloat until the Itasca could locate and rescue them or whether it was rough enough to endanger them immediately.

The Itasca radioed Washington the sea was smooth with visibility perfect. ■



Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan, Amelia's second pilot, in Los Angeles, May 1937.