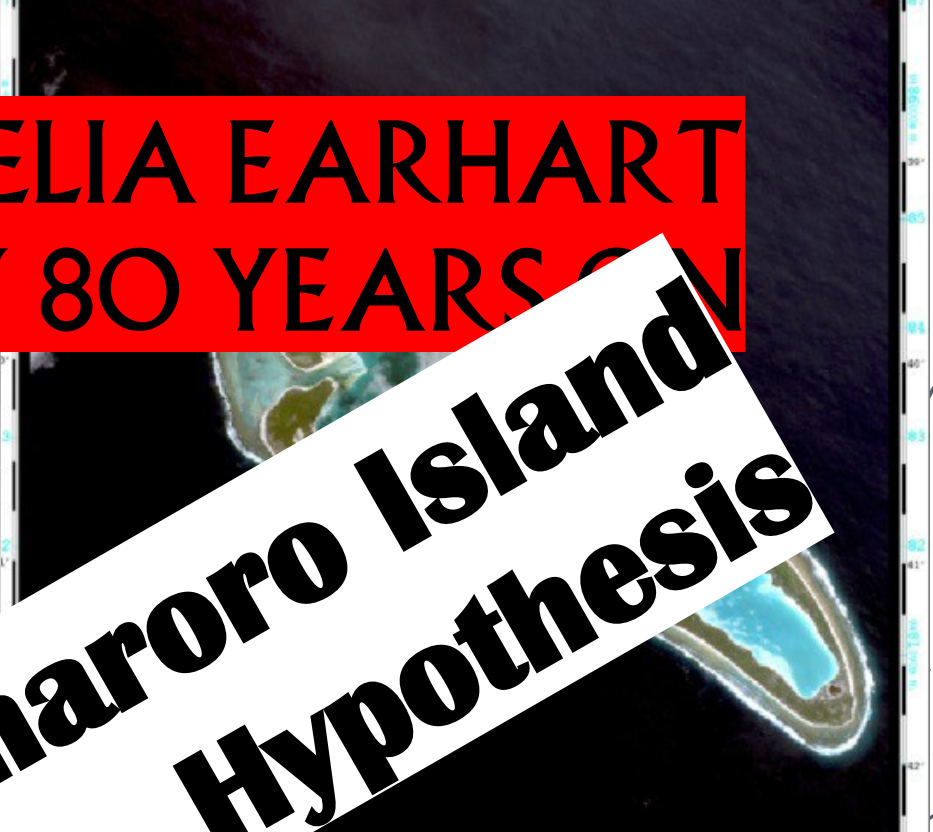




*Curtis Hart Bliss*  
*Amelia*  
*Capt.*  
*May 29, 1937*

# THE AMELIA EARHART MYSTERY 80 YEARS ON



# The Nikumaroro Island Hypothesis



# CREDITS

🕒 **The International Group for  
Historic Aircraft Recover (TIGHAR),  
USA**

🕒 **Lew Toulmin, PhD, Fellow, Royal  
Geographic Society, Silver Spring,  
Maryland, USA**

🕒 **Thomas F. King PhD, Archaeologist,  
Silver Spring Maryland, USA<sup>3</sup>**



Amelia Earhart  
Fred Noonan

Lockheed Electra 10E

Disappeared July 2, 1937  
over the Pacific Ocean.

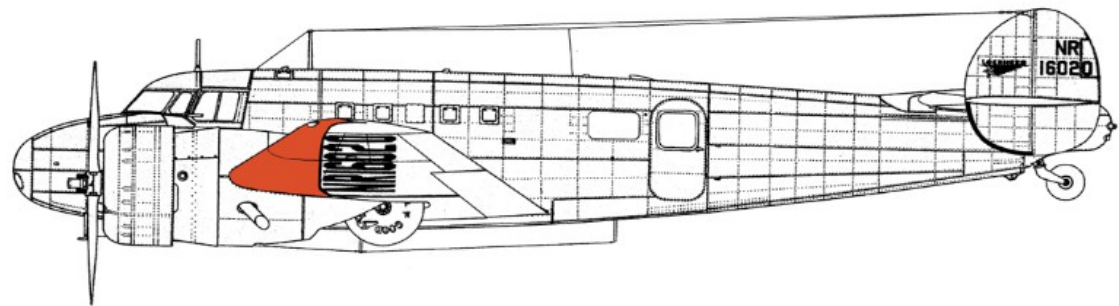


Photo Credit : Associated Press



# Subjects:

1. Who were Amelia and Fred?
2. The World Flight, 1937.
3. Nikumaroro [Niku] Hypothesis
4. Other theories.
5. Expedition to Niku Island.
6. Evidence: Niku Hypothesis
7. Earhart books and movies



Nikumaroro island, Rep. of Kiribati



Flag of the Republic of Kiribati

# Tomboy "Milly" born 1897, Atchison, KS...



**WHEN AMELIA EARHART WAS A SWEET GIRL GRAD** — Photo shows how Amelia Earhart, who is flying with Wilmer Stultz on attempted trans-Atlantic flight, appeared when she graduated from the Ogontz School in Philadelphia in 1918. —P. & A. Photo.

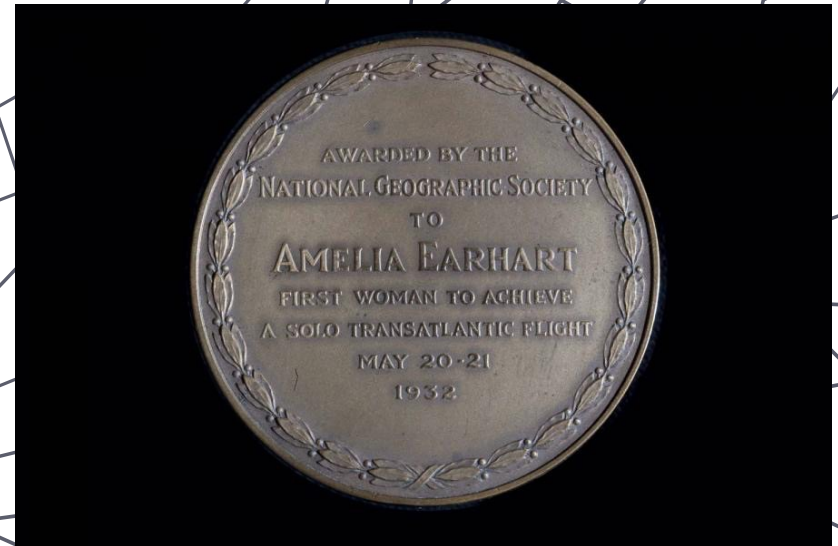
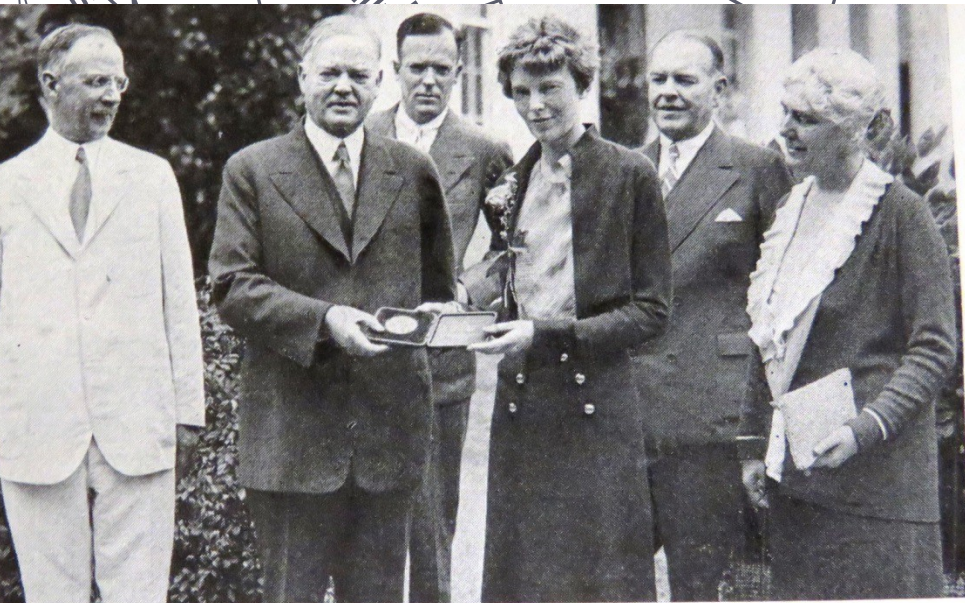


...schooled in Chicago & P



• 1928: Publisher George Putnam recruits Amelia as 1st woman to ride across the Atlantic (lecture & book deals)

1932: 1st woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean  
First woman to



# 1931 Putnam divorces, marries Amelia Earhart



Amelia Earhart and George Putnam <sup>8</sup>





Lockheed Electra Model 10E  
NR16020      2-550 HP PW Wasps



- **1937: The World Flight:** Attempted to be the first **PERSON(S)** to circle the globe at the equator, Lost and never found
- **Fred Noonan:** Left his Chief Navigator job at Pan-American

# The Purdue Exponent

Published Daily by Students of Purdue University

VOLUME XLVIII

LAFAYETTE, INDIANA, THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1937

NUMBER 118

## EARHART STARTS ON WORLD FLIGHT



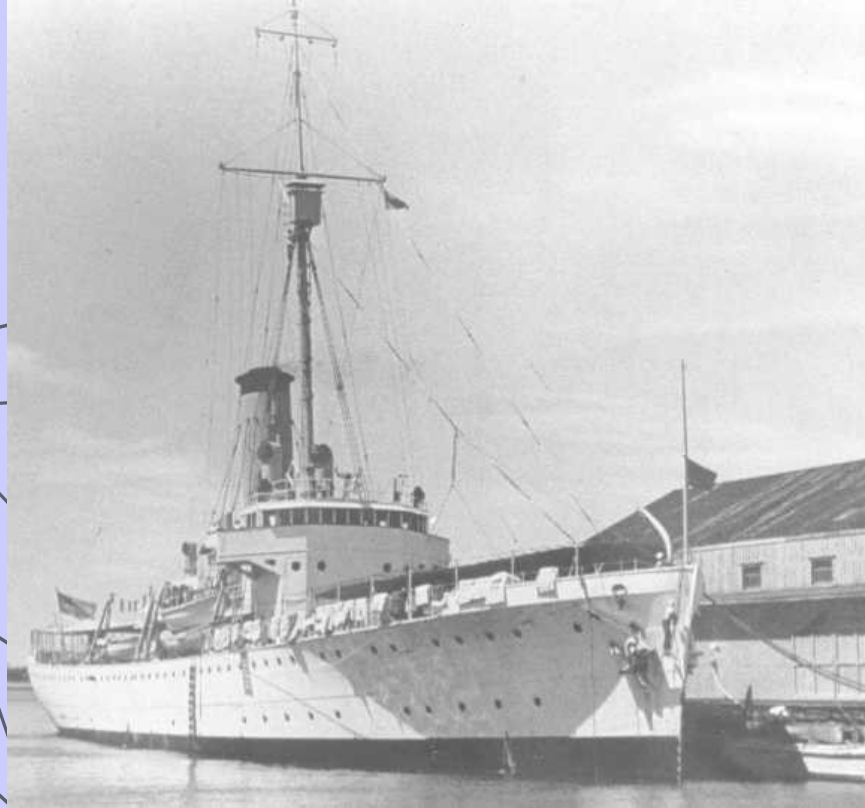
### EARHART'S FLIGHT PATH

With departure dates from select cities



THE WORLD FLIGHT: CIRCLE THE GLOBE AT ITS WIDEST POINT.

# The Flight's Last 20 Hours

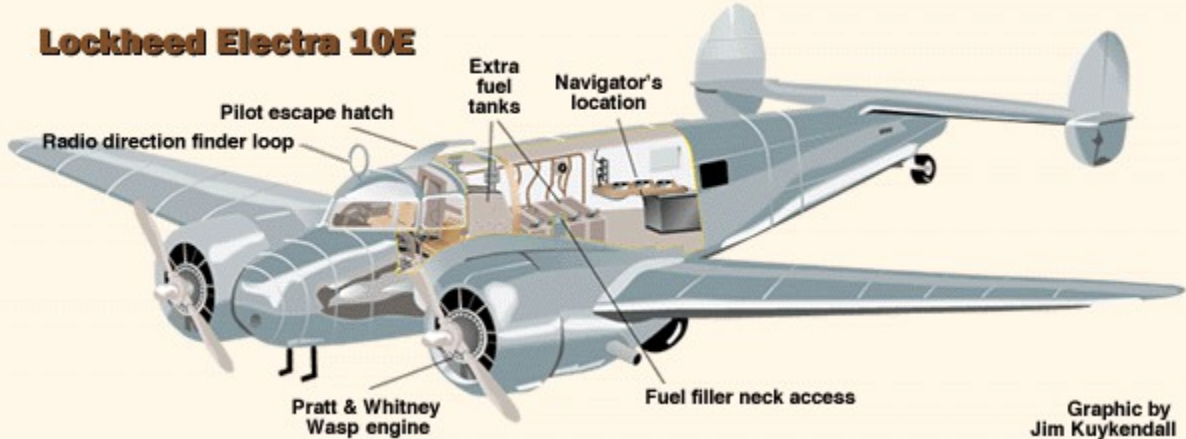


**US Coast Guard Cutter Itasca was at Howland Island to provide a direct line of finding and refueling.**

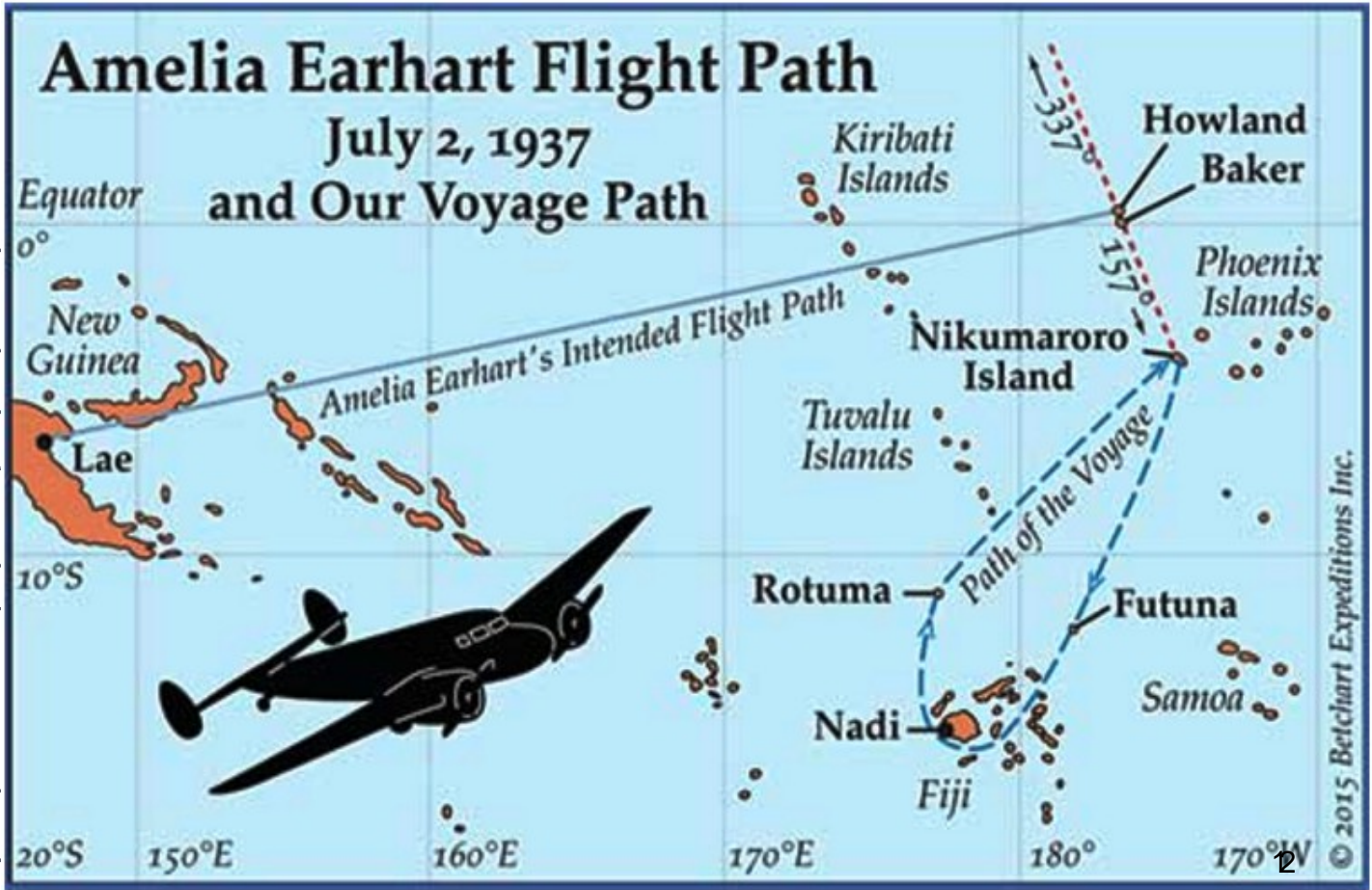




### Lockheed Electra 10E

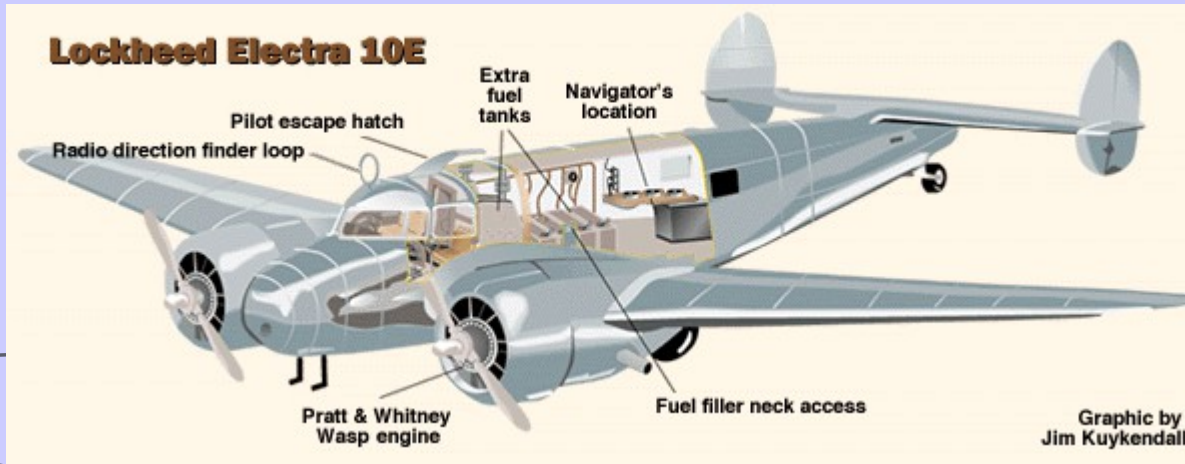


Graphic by Jim Kuykendall





# The Flight's Last 20 Hours



July 1, 12:30 PM: Earhart leaves Lae, New Guinea

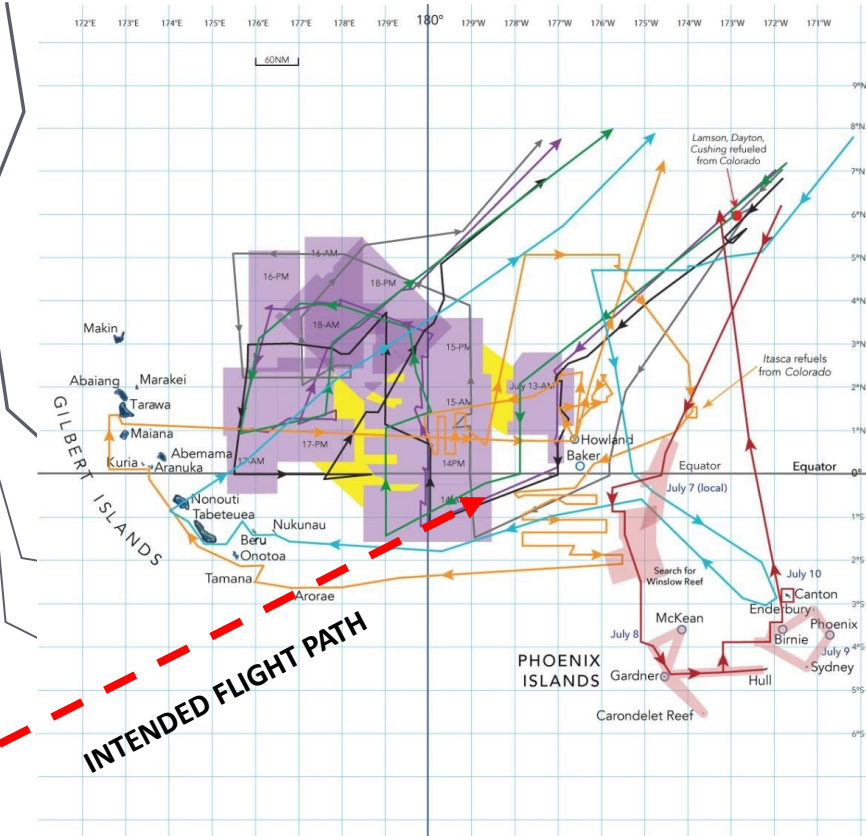
July 2, 8:43 AM: Calling Itasca, We are on the line 157/337. Will repeat. We are running on [the] line (last message)

# The USS Colorado Searched the Phoenix Islands

Photo # NH 55275 USS Colorado, photographed during the 1930s



USS Colorado



VOUGHT O3U-3 CORSAIR

... offered a \$2,000 reward

# Why the Phoenix Islands?



- Capt. Friedell from the *U.S.S. Colorado* stated:  
“Report received from Mr. Putnam stressing the Phoenix Island Group and stating...that the radio could not operate unless the plane was on land” (Post-Loss Signals)
- *The Phoenix Group includes the islands of Nikumaroro, Canton, McKean and others.*
- Last message: We are on the (navigation) line 157/337 (Thru the Phoenix Gr).
- Post-Loss Radio messages and radio bearings taken from Wake,





- Captured by the Japanese
- Ran out of fuel, Crashed/Sank
  - Alive in New Jersey, USA
    - Captured by aliens
- Taken to another dimension
  - Alive in the Philippines





# Captured by the Japanese

# SAN MATEAN SAYS JAPANESE EXECUTED AMELIA EARHART

**WOMAN'S STORY:**  
**Aviatrix Died Before Saipan Firing Squad**

By LIN DAY

(Copyright 1960 by the Appleton Printing Company)

A San Mateo woman who may have been one of the last to see Amelia Earhart alive, says that the famed aviatrix was executed by a Japanese firing squad even while the U. S. Navy was spending \$4,000,000 in a futile search for the missing flier and her navigator, Fredrick Noonan.

Mrs. Josephine Blanco Alkama of 15 South Idaho tree, has identified pictures of Amelia as the "American lady pilot" she saw taken into custody on the remote island of Saipan in July, 1937.

The woman flier was accompanied by a man, she said, an American also dressed in aviator's garb. While Mrs. Alkama's story has been partially known by a few news wires, this is the first time that she has publicly divulged the full details of what she saw in the tense pre-war days. If she is correct, she has not only solved a riddle that has puzzled the world for 30 years, but also has revealed a number of known facts heretofore.

Amelia Earhart Polman was 39 at the time she was taken into custody on the remote island of Saipan in July, 1937. She was flying from Los Angeles to Honolulu, 25,000 miles to the west.

"Last Flight" A widely known author, speaker and lecturer in addition to being one of the world's best sellers, she has published a book, aptly entitled "Last Flight" in 1957.

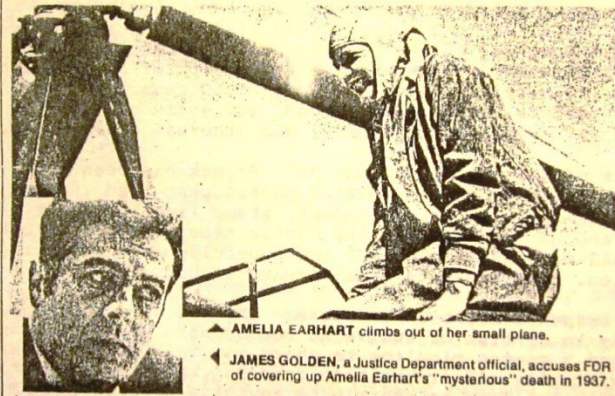


JOSEPHINE BLANCO ALKAMA

## San Mateo Times

DEVOTED TO THE INTEREST OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

### A Top Justice Department Official Exposes The Long-Buried Scandal



▲ AMELIA EARHART climbs out of her small plane.  
 ▲ JAMES GOLDEN, a Justice Department official, accuses FDR of covering up Amelia Earhart's "mysterious" death in 1937.

# FDR's Amelia Earhart 'Watergate'

By LEON FREILICH

# Betrayed by FDR?

**EXCLUSIVE**

**Street Edition**

# AMELIA EARHART KILLED ON SAIPAN

## San Mateo Times

DEVOTED TO THE INTEREST OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

### WITNESSES, PLANE PARTS Mystery of 23 Years Is Solved

By LINWOOD McETHE DAY

(Copyright 1960 by the Appleton Printing Company)

Amelia Earhart was almost killed with her navigator over the

island of Saipan and a

operative venture ripped the red fire

rescue of the "First Lady of the Air

year and Maxine

the mystery in a

moment in Saipan,

as said Hilda Sta-

ch aviation center,

revealed the down-

faller Fred Noonan,

her near the Pres-

ident up the his-

tory headquarters,

accountable for

the building in the

air.

Several witnesses

places of 1937 visit-

ers report where the

airplane was shot

by a Japanese plane

in the air.

The search for the

airplane was a

long and difficult

task.

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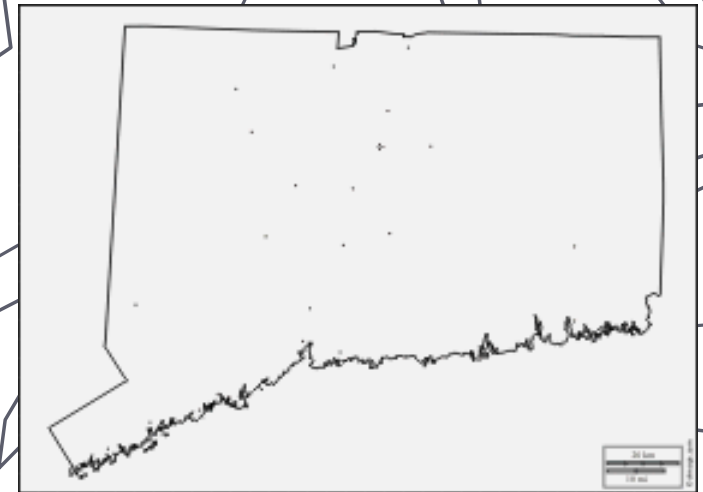
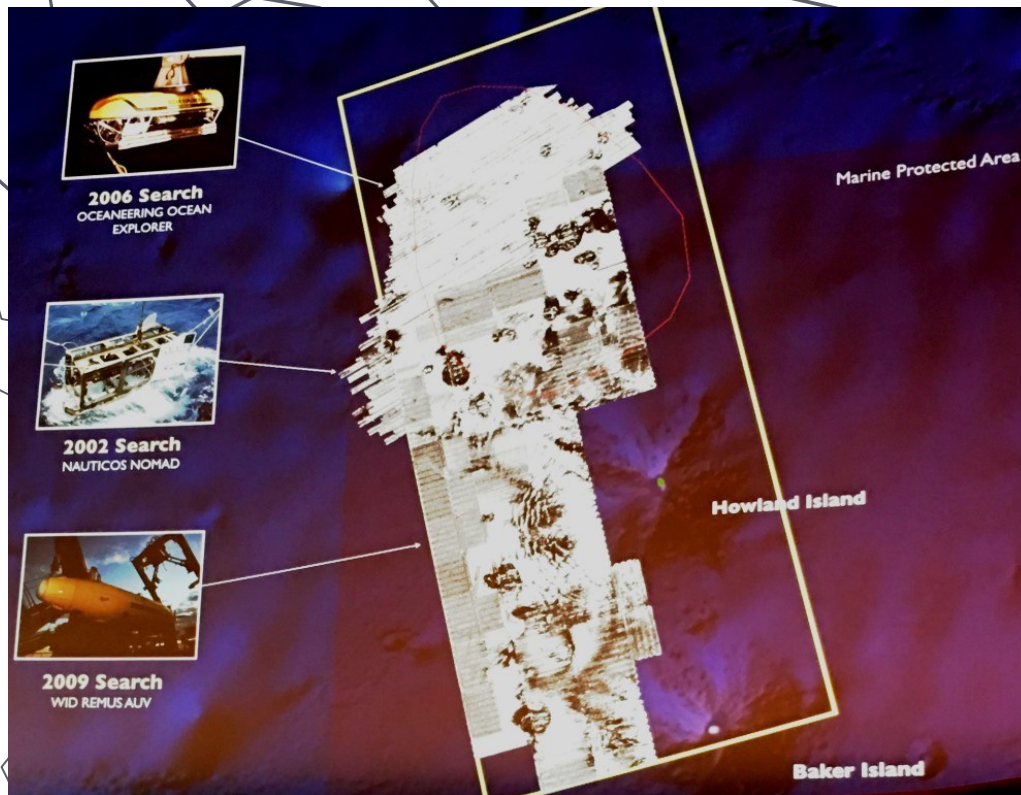
# Crashed at Sea? \$40 Million

## Spent

- 1989: mapping search by Longs N+W of Howland
- 1994: Timmer/Williamson attempt
- 1999: search by Timmer 45 days w/ side scan NW of Howland
- 2002: Kammerer attempt; Elgin Long 27 day search
- 2006: Nauticos/Waite search 687 sq. mi. NW of Howland
- 2009: Nauticos/Waite search 2000 sq. mi W of Howland
- 2017: Nauticos/Eustace search 960 sq. mi. N/S of Howland



**Mermaid Vigilance + AUV  
used by Nauticos in early 2017**



**CT = 14,000 sq. KM, 5500 sq. mi.,  
total area searched & mapped via sonar**



# 1988: The Nikumaroro Hypothesis

Hypothesis: An Educated guess that can be tested

Nikumaroro hypothesis: Earhart and Noonan landed and died on Nikumaroro Island

Nikumaroro: Uninhabited island SE of Howland Island

Team's research program: test the hypothesis





# What is Nikumaroro?

Formerly:  
Gardner Island

Phoenix  
Islands

Republic of  
Kiribati

Formerly  
part of Crown  
Colony of the  
Gilbert and  
Ellice Islands

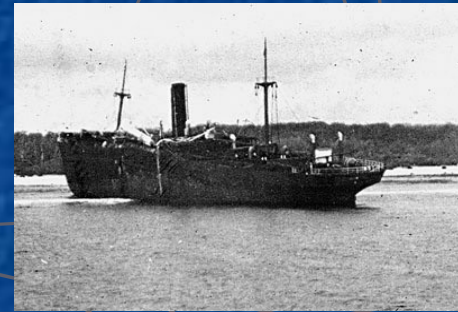
Nikumaroro (Gardner) 16 Apr 2001 IKONOS true-color image

Image processing by NOAA/NOS Imagery: [www.spaceimaging.com](http://www.spaceimaging.com)



# History of Nikumaroro

- SS Norwich City Shipwrecked in 1929
- 1938-63: The British formed the Phoenix Islands Settlement Scheme: "PISS"
  - Dec. 1938: working party landed on Nikumaroro
  - 1940: British Officer Gerald Gallager assigned as PISS Administrator. A skeleton is found



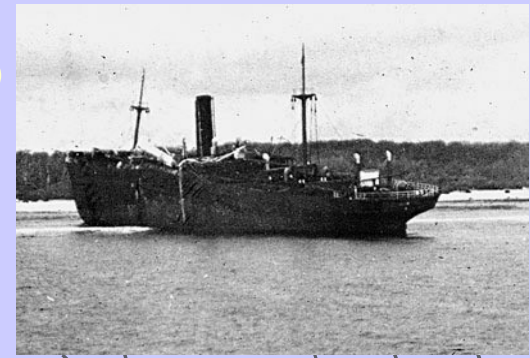
- 1944-46: USCG Loran Station
- 1970s: USAF ICBM tests





# So, TIGHAR Headed For Nikumaroro

## Expeditions So Far:



- 1989 Land Search
- 1991 Land and Underwater Search
- 1996 Land Search
- 1997 Land and Underwater Search
- 1998 Research: In England and on Kanton Is.
- 1999 Land Search
- 2001 Land (7-Site)/Underwater Search
- 2003 Underwater Search
- 2007 Village and 7 Site Search

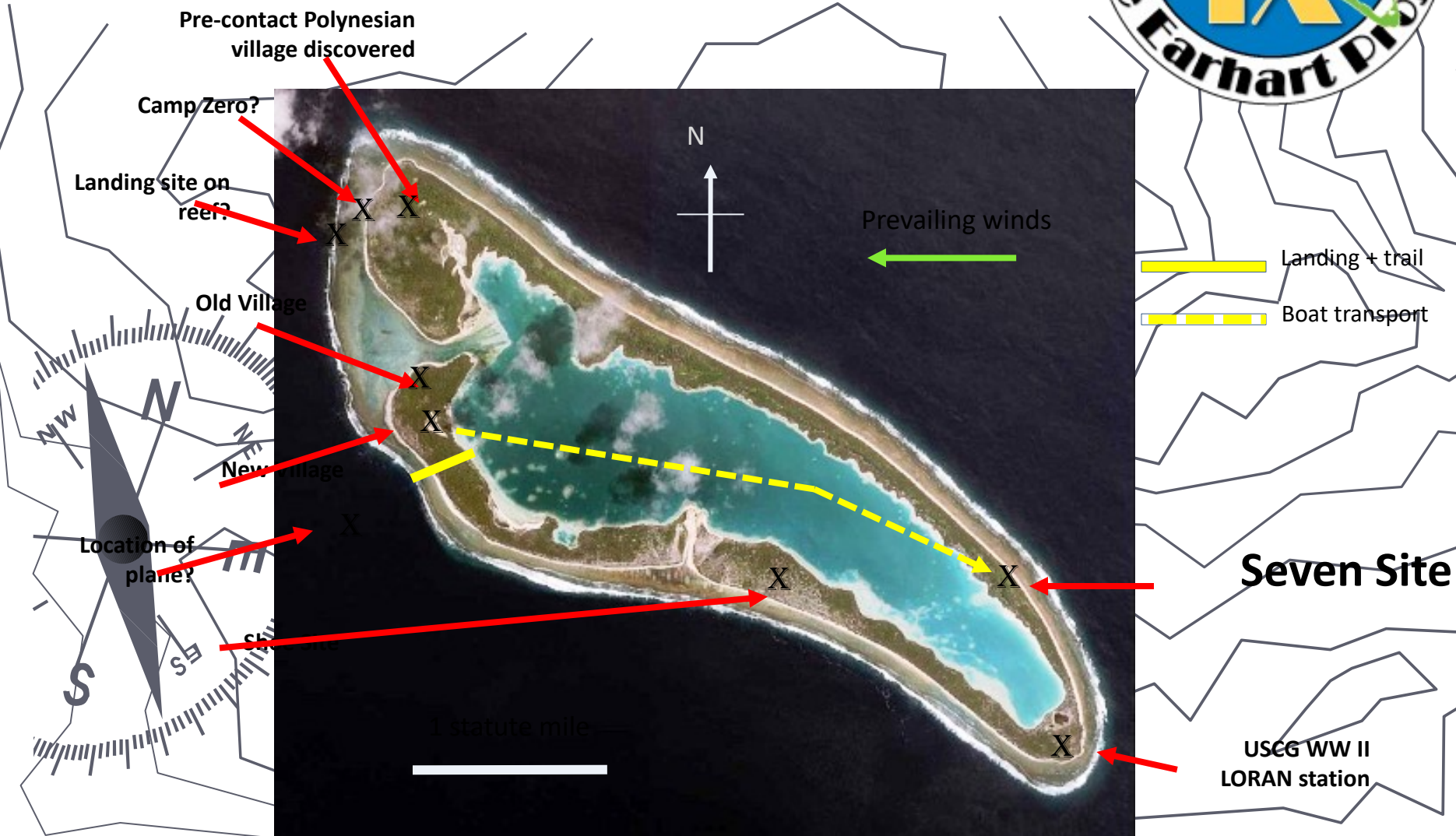


# 2017: BETCHART EXPEDITION



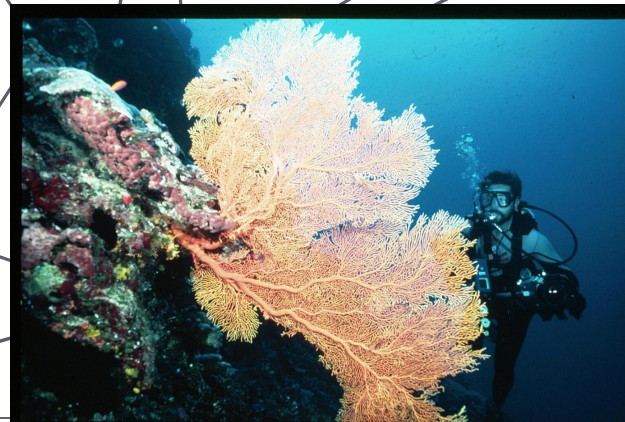
**MV Reef Endeavour**  
**5-DAY SAIL ONE-WAY FROM FIJI**

# A small island, with many sites





# Getting ashore and around









# 1929, Wreck of the Norwich City

8 Sailors Lost





# Humans worked hard in 2017





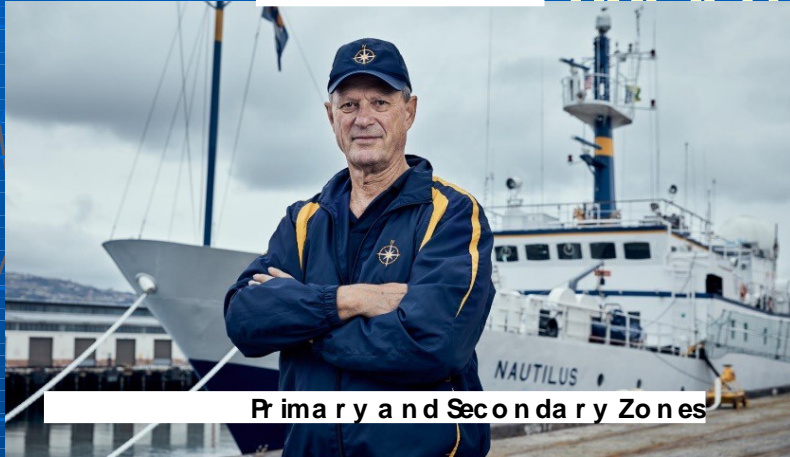
# 2017: Last Group off the Island





# AUGUST 2019: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Bob Ballard and *Nautilus*



Primary and Secondary Zones

Plus: Trip Niku and Tarawa Island



Fredrik Heibert, PhD  
Archaeologist, National  
Geographic Soc. Fellow



Tom King, PhD  
Archaeologist



Julie Brewer & Ruby



Lynn Angeloro and Berkeley

Historical Human Remains Detection Dogs



# AUGUST 2017. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY NIKUMARORO EXPEDITION, NIKUMARORO & TARAWA ISLAND



## 2. The 2019 Nautilus team

- A. Bob Ballard's crew aboard the Nautilus
- B. Land archaeology
- C. Te Umwanibong Museum



## 3. The 2019 team visually examined

- a) 100 percent of the island down to 750 meters
- b) 100 percent of the primary zone visually down to 900 meters
- c) Metal objects collected, A
- d) The island rises thru 5,000 meters [3 mi, 16

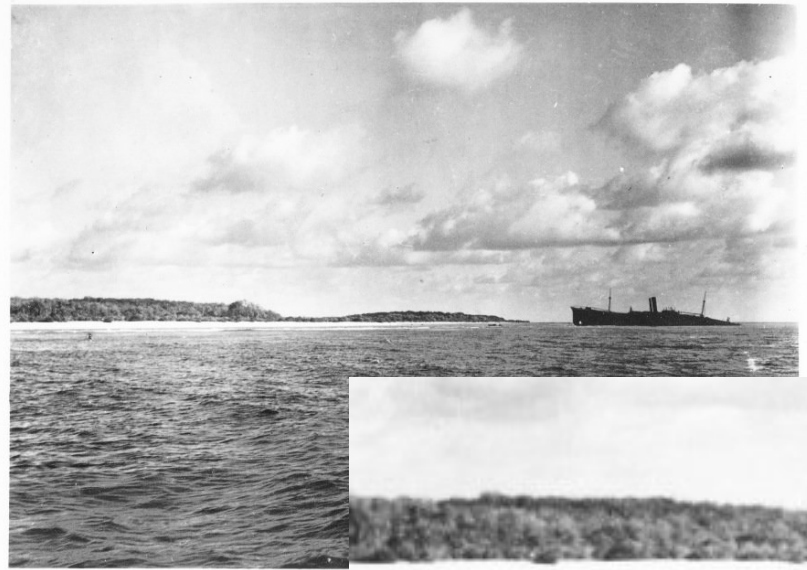


4. **Niku 2019 Island Archaeology:** Dogs deployed, Additional soil collected, Report pending.

5. **Tarawa Island Research:** Before Niku, Fredrik Hiebert and team visited Tarawa. They examined fragments of a human skull in the Te Umwanibong Museum and Cultural Centre.



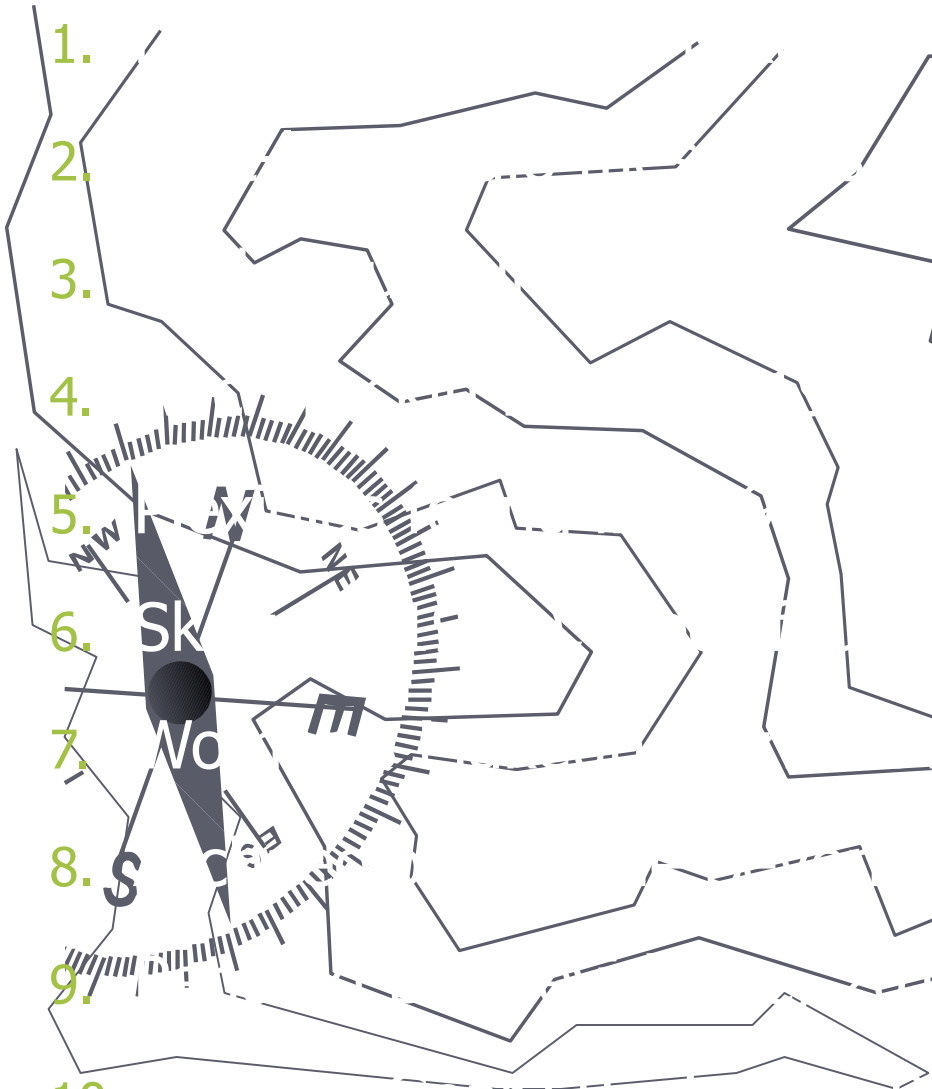
Wrap Up.  
Selected key  
evidence:



*Gardiner Is.*



**Landing Gear?  
Bevington Photo**





# Line of Position

Line of Position  
157-337 degrees

7:40 a m: 'Must be on you'

8:43 a m: 'We at see the line you" 157 337"

Howland Is.

Baker  
Equator

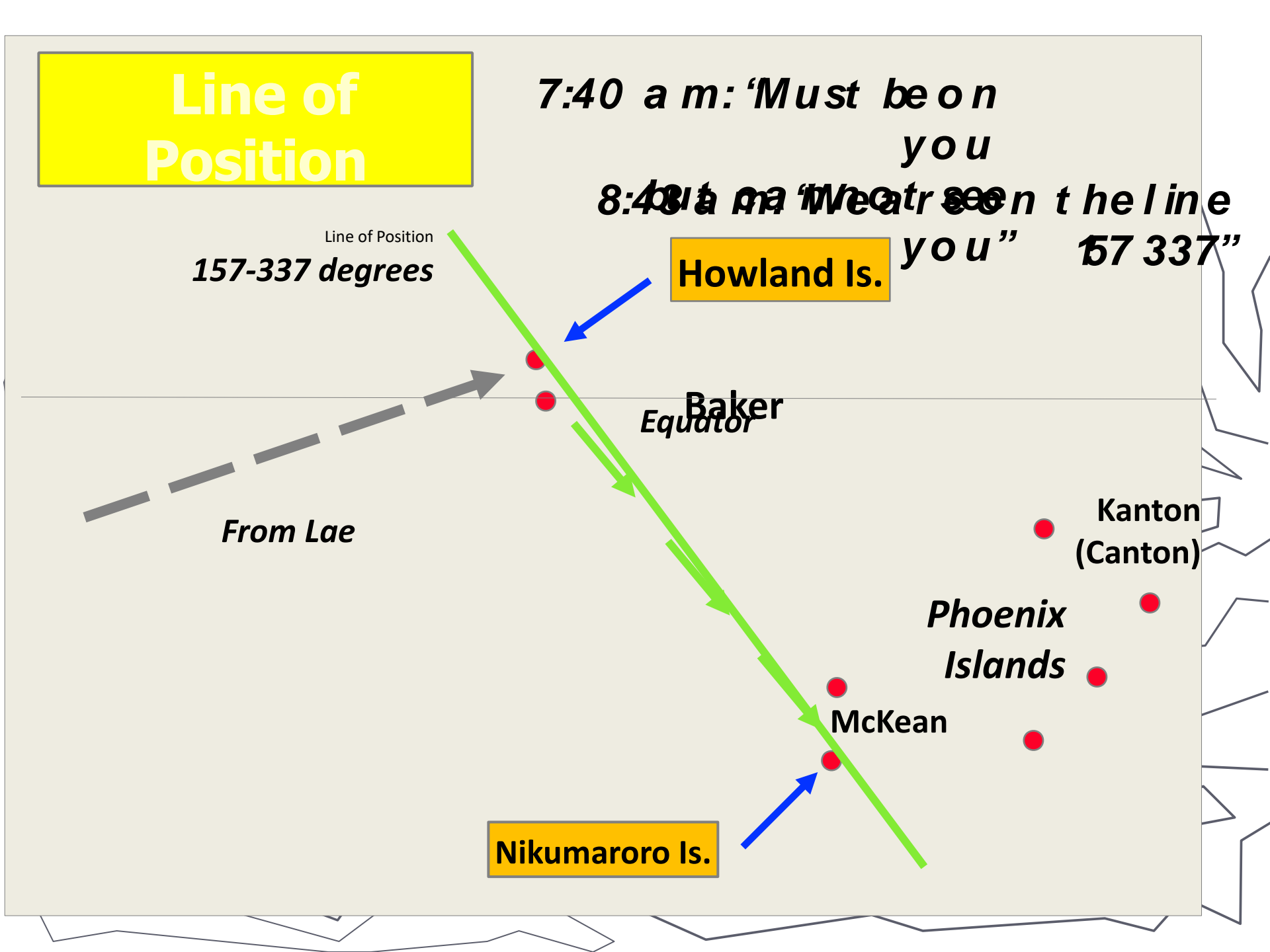
From Lae

Kanton  
(Canton)

Phoenix  
Islands

McKean

Nikumaroro Is.



# Wake-Midway-Oahu & Post-Loss

JULY GM TIME SIGNAL RECEIVED AT

3	0200	Weak signals, "L-A-T"...	L.A
3	0400	Weak signs, "erratic, undeciph."	L.A.
3	0517	Carrier wave	Honolulu
	3 0530	"Hear her now, weak..."	Itasca
	3 0600	(Itasca requests dashes)	
3	0600	Itasca request, responding dashes	Achilles
3	0604-06	"Something like generator start"	Itasca
3	0607	Unreadable, "Earhart" mentioned	Itasca
3	0700	Weak, unreadable	L.A.
3	0800-45	Earhart voice, SOS loud & clear	Amarillo
3	0831-54	Unintel. voice, "like last night"	Nauru

Others: FL, WY, Australia

## Quincy Patriot Ledger

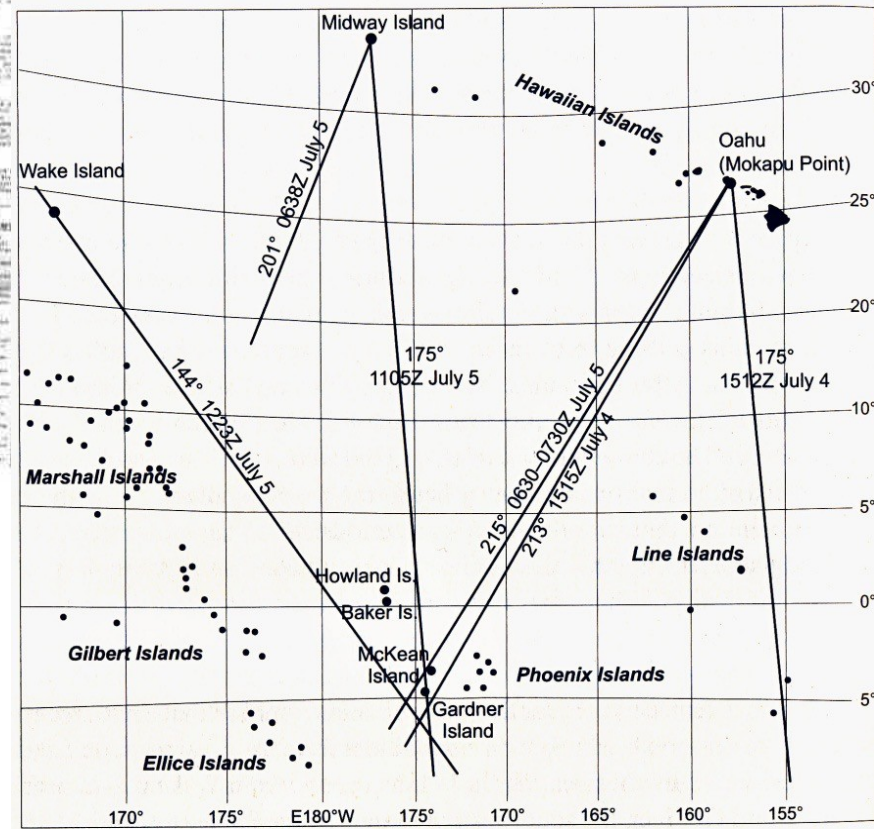
The Daily Evening Paper for Quincy and South Shore Towns

QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS SATURDAY EVENING JULY 4 1931

The Weather

Forecast for July 4-5  
Partly cloudy, light breeze  
Temperature 60-70  
Wind light breeze  
Sea calm

# FAINT SIGNALS HEARD FROM AMELIA'S PLANE



Amelia Earhart: The Lost Evidence

NPG 1304

**NAVAL MESSAGE**

RECEIVED AT NAVY DEPARTMENT  
F5L MUSK V NPM Z NRUI V QUAX P GR 44.

FROM: COMDR HAWAIIAN SECTION CG  
ACTION: ITASCA C G  
KXKX

**PRIORITY** 037 JUL 5 12 40

PASSED TO OPNAV & CINCUS RMR BY RDO HONOLULU FOR APPROPRIATE ACTION

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 4-7143 PRIORITY /KD

8005 FOLLOWING COPIED NAVY RADIO WAILUPE 1130 TO 1230 GCT  
QUOTE 281 NORTH HOWLAND CALL KHAQQ BEYOND NORTH DONT HOLD  
WITH US MUCH LONGER ABOVE WATER SHUT OFF UNQUOTE KEVED  
TRANSMISSION EXTREMELY POOR KEYING BEHIND CARRIER FRAGMENTARY  
PHRASES BUT COPIED BY THREE OPERATORS 0242

49:03 / 1:23:59



# 1989: Found The Dado

Dado, Aluminum

15 inches



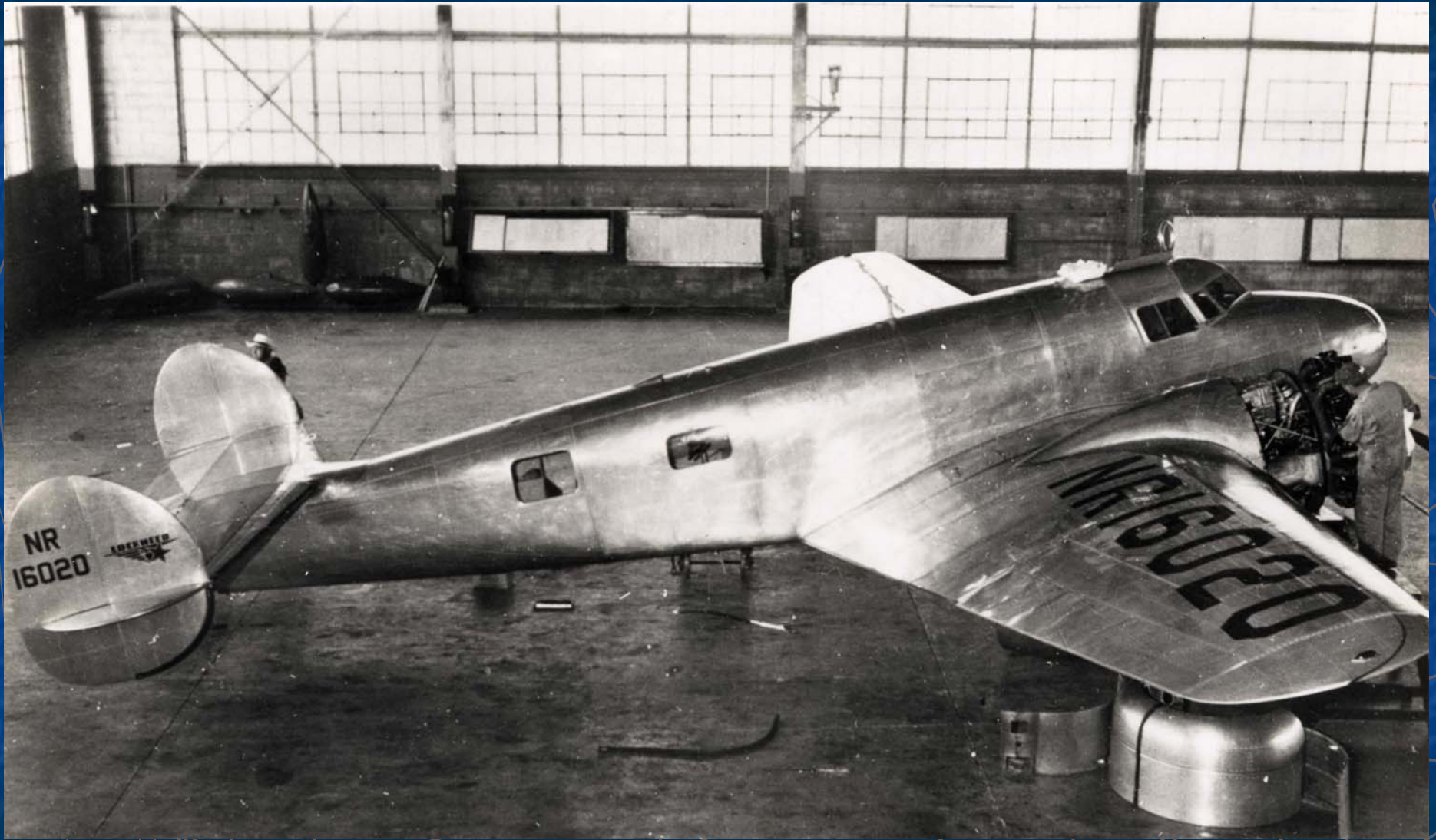
# 1991: The Aircraft Skin

## Skin, Aircraft Aluminum



- The skin is aircraft aluminum.
- A hand-stamped label on the skin and the font type indicates a pre-1938 manufacture date.
- An attached rivet is a pre-1940 style and it is not a flush riveted head as used on World War II aircraft.







**SEPT. 2014-2019 FORENSIC IMAGE ANALYSIS:**

**RIVET LINES APPEAR CONSISTENT  
EVIDENCE OF NON-CONNECTED UPRIGHT  
EVIDENCE THE PATCH WAS DEFORMED DUE TO WEAKENING OF THE FUSELAGE  
ANALYSIS IS CONTINUING**





# 1996: The Plexiglas

## Plexiglass



- Matches Lockheed Window Specs as in:
- *Correct material, Polymethyl methacrylate*
- *Correct curvature*
- *Correct thickness, 1/8 inch*
- It does not match any window on a World War II airplane

# Lockheed Windshield



Skeleton Documents  
1997-1998

M.P. /

(Serial No )

TELEGRAM.

From The Officer-in-Charge, Phoenix Scheme, Gardner Is.,

To The Resident Commissioner, Ocean Island.

No. 71

2

(Date) 23rd September, 1940.

Working party found human skull



Some months ago working party on Gardner discovered human skull - this was buried and I only recently heard about it. Thorough search has now produced more bones ( including lower jaw ) part of a shoe a bottle and a sextant box. It would appear that

- (a) Skeleton is possibly that of a woman,
- (b) Shoe was a woman's and probably size 10,
- (c) Sextant box has two numbers on it 3500 ( stencilled ) and 1542 - sextant being old fashioned and probably painted over with black enamel.

Bones look more than four years old to me but there seems to be very slight chance that this may be remains of Amelia Earhardt. If United States authorities find that above evidence fits into general description, perhaps they could supply some dental information as many teeth are intact. An holding list of finds for present but have not exhumed skull.

There is no local indication that this

More bones found

Woman's shoe

Sextant box

"Slight chance" may be Earhart



# Skeleton (Since Lost)

## TELEGRAM.

From The Officer-in-Charge P.I.S.S., Gardner Island . . .

To The Secretary for the W.P.H.C., Suva. . . . .

No. . . 1, . . . (Date) 17th October, . . . 1940

Confidential.

Complete skeleton not found only skull,  
lower jaw, one thoracic vertebra, half pelvis, part  
scapula, humerus, radius, two femurs, tibia and fibula.  
Skull discovered by working party six months ago - report  
reached me early September. Working party buried skull  
but made no further search.

Bones were found on South East corner of  
island about 100 feet above ordinary high water springs.  
Body had obviously been lying under a "ren" tree and  
remains of fire, turtle and dead birds appear to indicate  
life. All small bones have been removed by giant coconut  
crabs which have also damaged larger ones. Difficult to  
estimate age bones owing to activities of crabs but am quite  
certain they are not less than four years old and probably  
much older.



Bones found  
SE corner under  
"Ren" tree

Fire, bird, turtle remains

Bones damaged by crab



5.5 ft.-8 in.

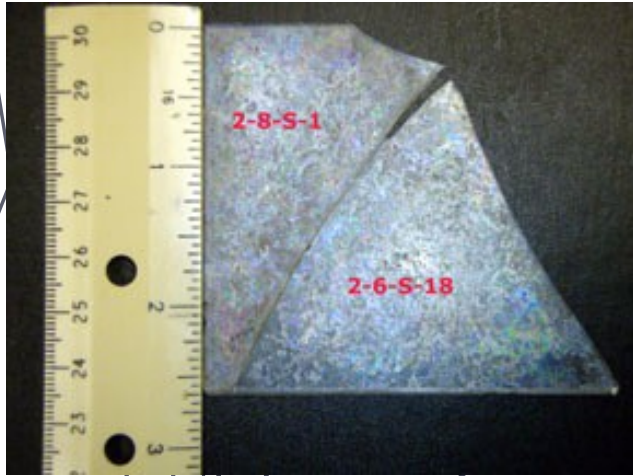


5 ft. 7 in.

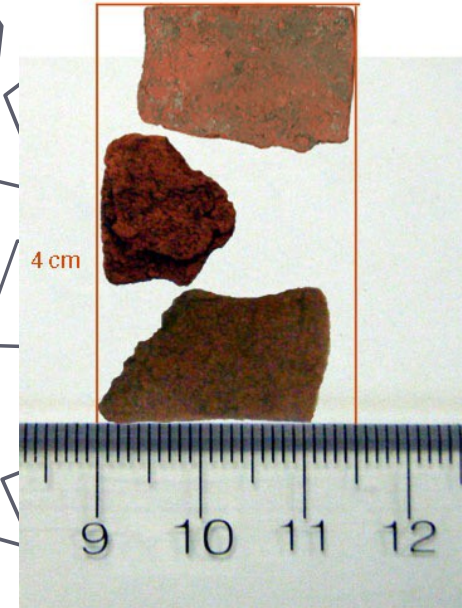
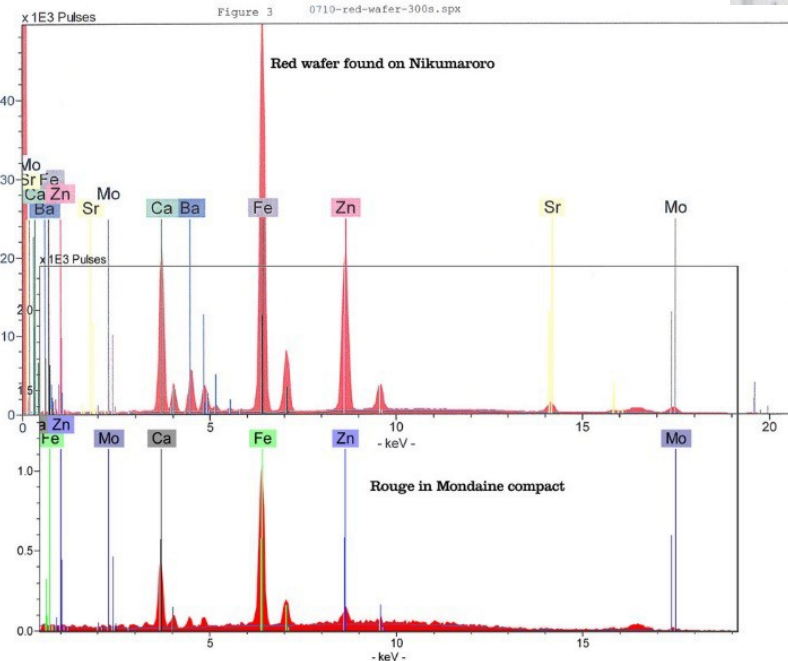
Dr. Hoodless' 1941 Report: 13 bones found

Dr. Jantz's 2018 Report: "if the bones do not belong to Amelia Earhart, then they are from someone very similar to her." (99%)

# Probable Lady's Compact: 7-Site

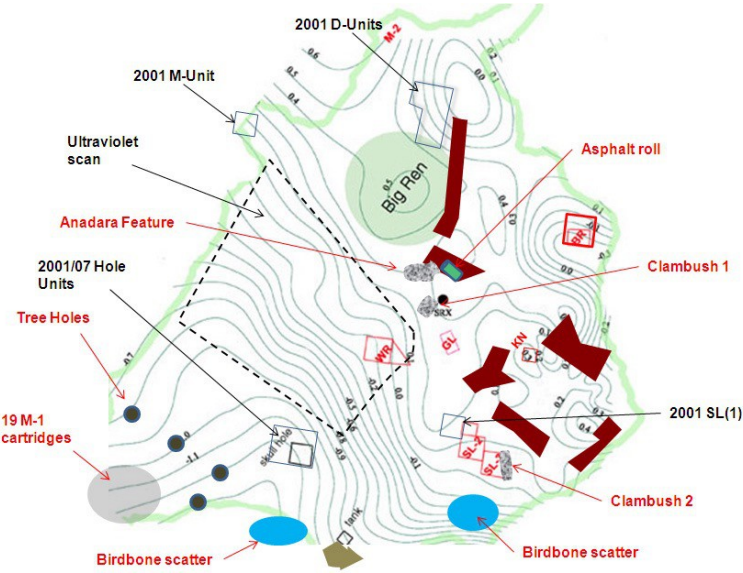


Earhart with compact





# Archaeology at the 7- Site, Ren Tree



Forensic Dogs alerted here  
and NW of the Shoe Site  
Soil was collected, A partial  
DNR sequence was obtained.

Also Found: Bird, Turtle  
Bones, Bottles and more

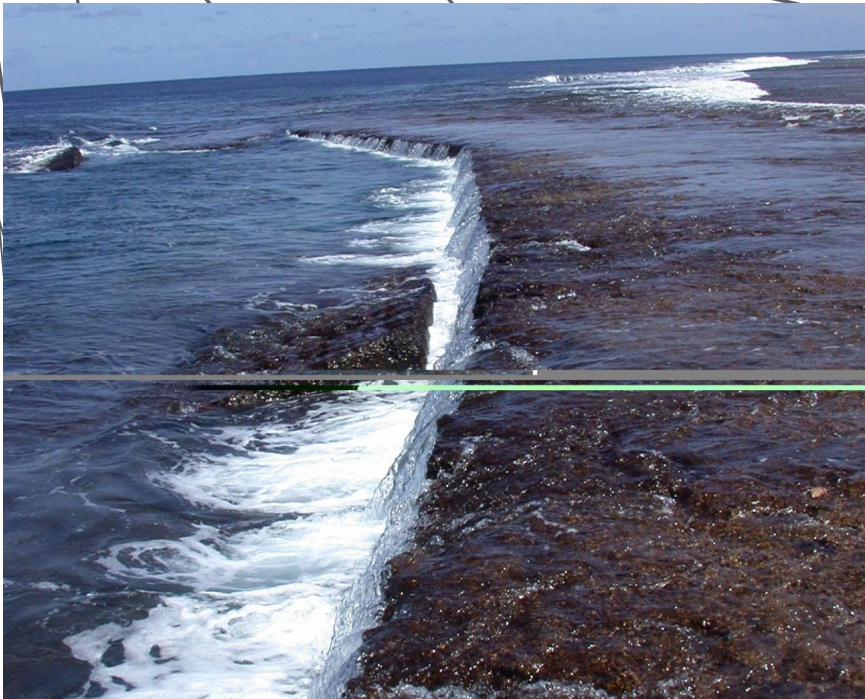




**If the airplane is underwater, how did it land @ Niku?**







# Dry Reef Flat: Proposed Landing Area





**WE THINK WHAT HAPPENED IS...**



# Complicating Factors (Noise)

- *S.S. Norwich City*: Wrecked on island's NW reef in a storm in 1929
  - 8 sailors lost, bodies not recovered, Perhaps Gallagher found the bones of one of them?
  - **Research Paper: Lost Norwich City Crewmen: Potential Sources of the Human Remains Discovered on Gardner Island.** Saleh Ragee: 5 ft. 6 in.
- **World War II B-24 airplane parts have been found on the island.** Brought there by natives from other islands some of them were used as air force bases on them.
- **USS Bushnell**: In 1939 the US Navy surveyed Niku. In 1940 a sextant box numbered 1542/3500 was collected with the bones. In 2018 research revealed the Bushnell carried a sextant with Navy Observatory<sup>49</sup> No. 1542.

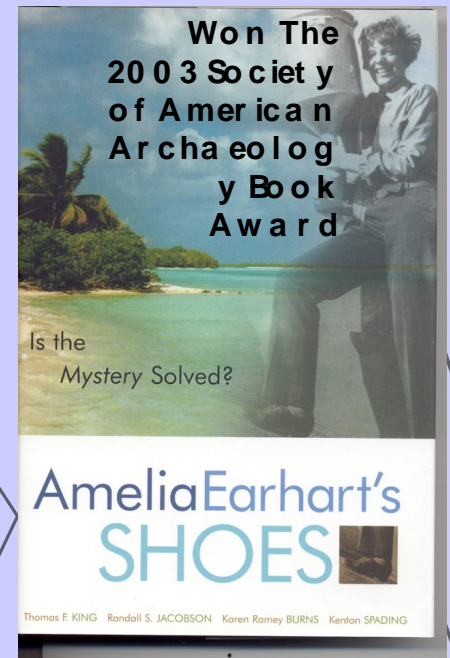
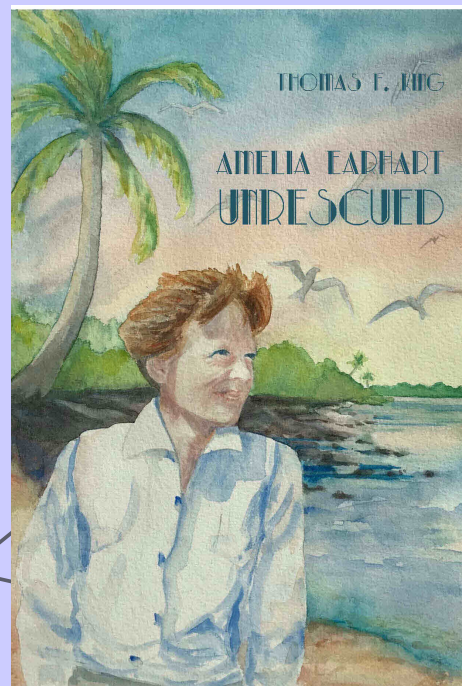
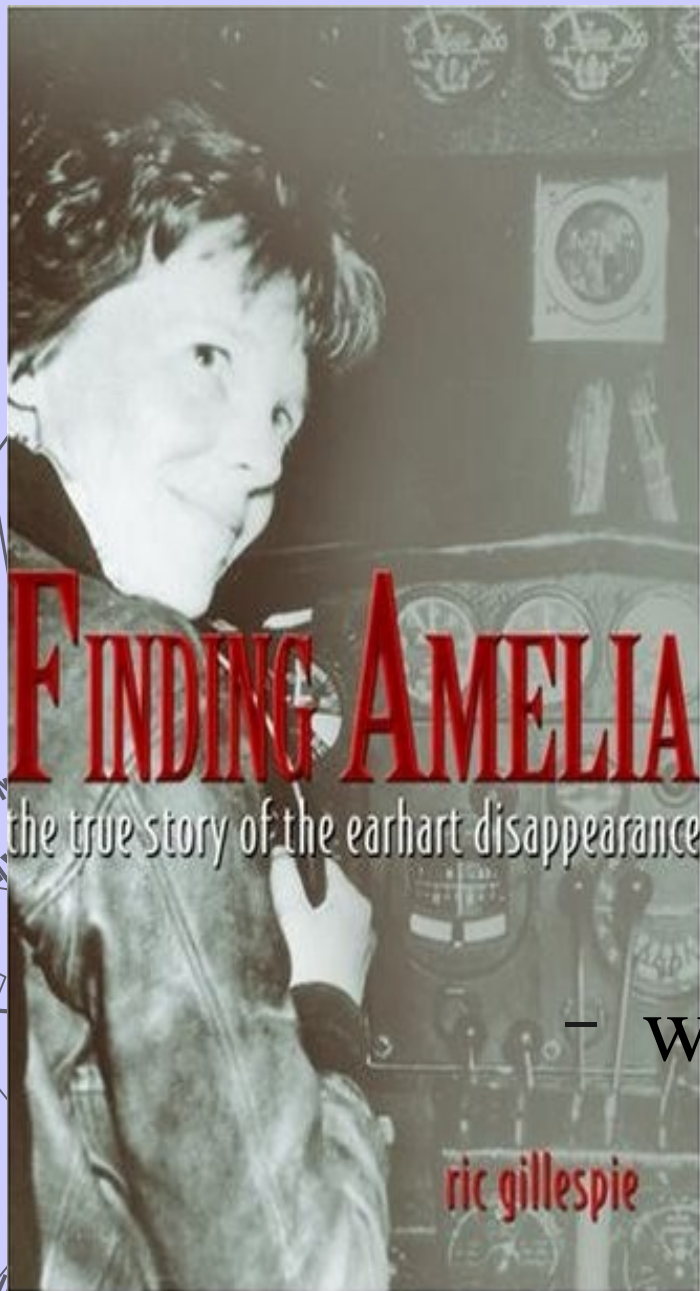


10 x 10 x 5"  
Typical Brandis



# Summary:

- LOP and Post-loss signals point to Nikumaroro
- Airplane wreckage reported on reef by colonists
- Airplane parts found in the village by TIGHAR team
- Skeleton found in 1940 at SE end of the island
- Forensic dogs alerted at the 7- Site, possible DNA
- Also found at the 7-Site (similar to Gallagher)
  - Fish/bird/turtle bones, campfires
  - Possible attempt at water purification
  - Apparent female-associated artifacts (makeup, skin cream....)
- But there are lost Norwich City Seaman



- [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

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# Plans for Future Expeditions

- 7-8 days on the island
- Research Team & Paid Passengers
  - Continue searching the 7-Site, Big Ren
  - Search the Shoe-Site Area
  - More work in the village and other sites
  - Forensic dogs Again
  - Archive Research
  - Later, pending additional archaeology on Land, Potential for additional underwater exploration

# Opportunities



- Join TIGHAR
  - Professionally Published Journal
    - <http://www.tighar.org>, Info and Artifact Research
    - <http://www.betchartexpeditions.com/>
  - Help fund the research
    - Archaeology
    - Biology
    - Archival research in the US and Europe
    - Archival research in Fiji
    - Participate on a future expedition team!



# YOU COULD JOIN AN EXPEDITION



2017: MV Reef Endeavour  
BERTHS: \$10,000, 20+ DAYS

- *Kenton Spading, P.E., 651-272-7970 (USA)*

*KSpading@Comcast.net*

- *Co-Author, Amelia Earhart's Shoes: Is the Mystery Solved? Altamira Press*

- [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

- [www.altamirapress.com](http://www.altamirapress.com)

- *The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR)*

- [www.tighar.org](http://www.tighar.org) On the website....



# Q U E S T I O N S ?



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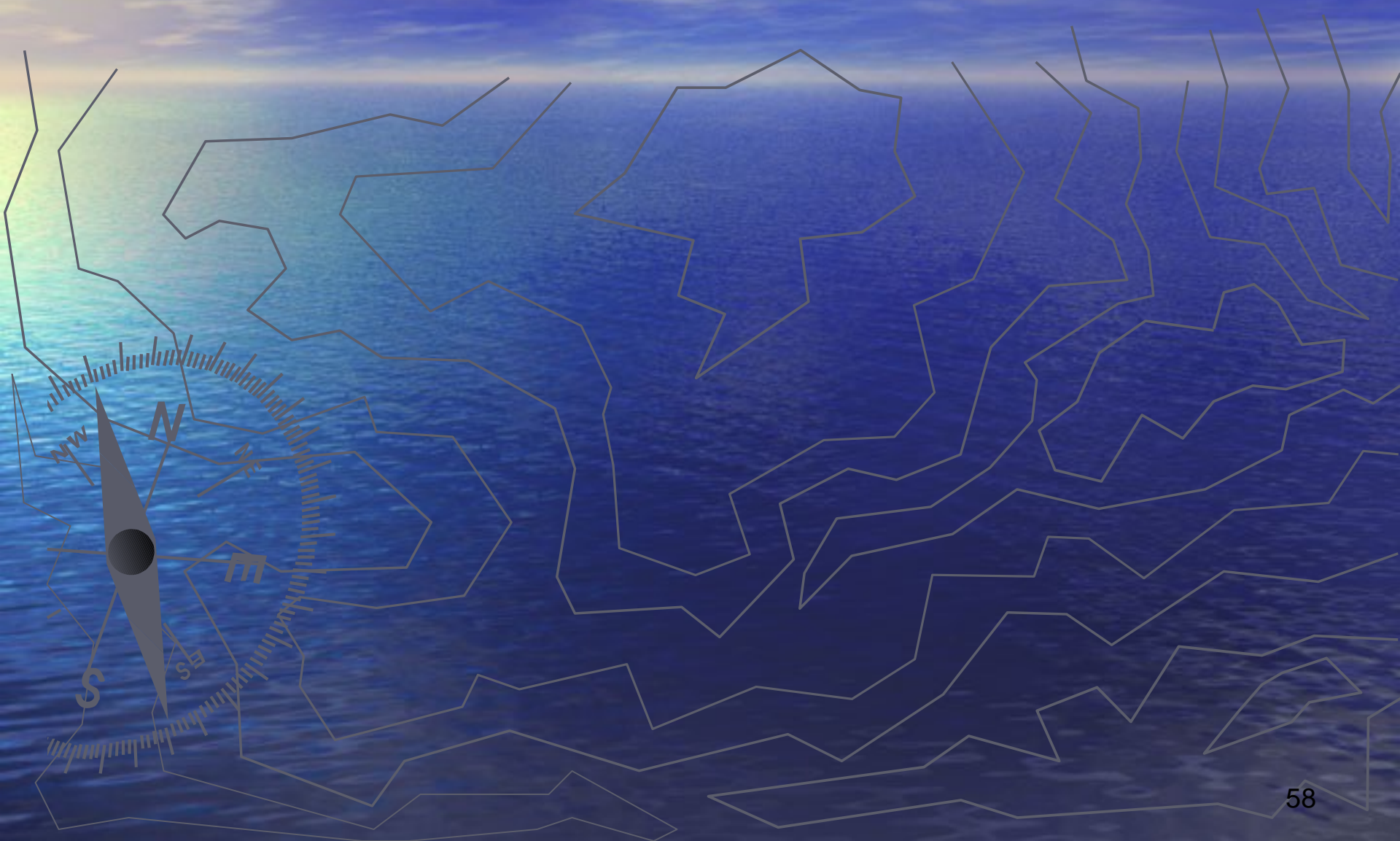
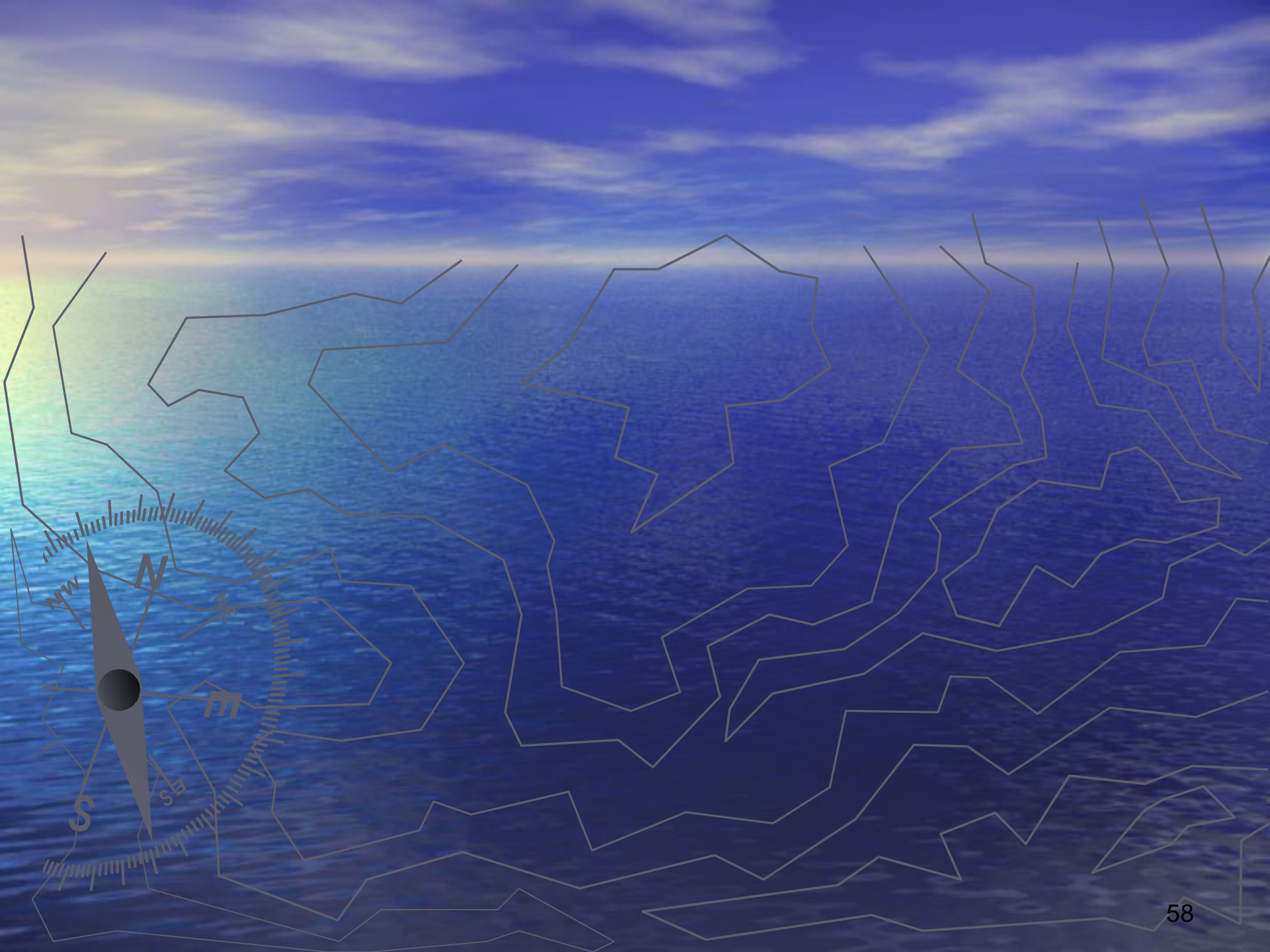
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# Niku 2017 Expedition

