



Press Information:

"AMELIA EARHART
MYSTERY"

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A plate and a dust shield that may change history. Was Amelia Earhart captured by the Japanese?

Now, for the first time, the knowledge of what happened to Amelia Earhart may be about to change. An explorer from Bow, Washington, by the name of Dick Spink, recently discovered two artifacts from the reefs of the Marshall Islands (a small aluminum cover plate that was at one time painted red and a circular metal dust cover from a landing-gear wheel assembly). Spink believes both artifacts came from the Earhart airplane when she and her navigator vanished July 2, 1937, during an attempted around-the-world flight. For 77 years they were thought to be junk lying on the reefs of Milli Atoll.

The size and shape appear consistent with an APU (Auxiliary Power Unit) plate and an internal dust cover off the wheel hub and brake assembly off the left tire of a Goodyear Airwheel. However, the APU plate or the red plate may have instead been an inspection plate for the vent openings of the 16 gallon aux. fuel tank in the left wing.



There is no question the red plate found at Milli Atoll (Marshall Islands) came off an American airplane. It is not Japanese. It is either an inspection plate, or an access plate, or an APU plate. The paint primer the Japanese used in World War II (Aotake) was highly advanced and had a high gloss finish. It was sprayed on in multiple layers. The primer on this plate, as testified by expert witnesses, is zinc chromate which has an unmistakable yellowish-green-blue cast. It was developed by U.S. companies in the 1930s for use in painting airplanes. It is a 100% American product. **The red plate has three identifiers:**

- 1. Red paint believed to be a match for the leading edges areas of the Earhart wings.**
- 2. The unmistakable 45 degree wrinkles of an airplane crash.**
- 3. The undeniable U.S. zinc chromate primer on both sides of the plate.**



To see the second artifact Dick Spink found you don't have to go far. Spink is holding the red plate in his left hand over the reef where it was found. Above the red plate and slightly to the right is a circular piece of metal that everyone on the expedition thought it

was just a piece of junk. When Dick's aviation adviser Jim Hayton of North Sound Aviation saw the picture, he recognized it immediately.

The circular plate turned out to be the dust shield for a hub cap assembly off the landing gear of a Lockheed Model 10 Electra equipped with Goodyear Airwheels, the same make and model airplane Earhart was flying. It meant a second trip to Milli Atoll to retrieve the circular plate. Jim Hayton, an airplane mechanic who restores vintage aircraft, went "buggy" as he would describe it. Instantly, he knew what it was.



In this picture, Jim is holding the aluminum plate over the wheel hub of a Lockheed 10. Jim Hayton, Sedro-Woolley, Washington, is an aircraft accident investigator who has been contacted by the Federal Aviation Administration on numerous occasions to testify on aircraft crashes. He has also been called to testify before Congress and National Transportation Safety Board investigators.

The recovered circular plate fits the L-10 wheel hub perfectly. "To me, this is the Holy Grail," Hayton said of the dust cover, which he believes was part of the Goodyear Airwheel assembly from the left-side landing gear on Earhart's Electra. The Airwheel assembly included a "soft" tire manufactured especially for landing on rough terrain.

"Only 148 airplanes in the Lockheed Electra 10 series (one of which Earhart piloted) were built," said Hayton. "Of those, a very small number had Goodyear Airwheels installed," he said. According to Hayton, the chances that the dust cover came from a Lockheed Electra other than Earhart's are practically zero."

“This is the first time that somebody has offered hard evidence from the Marshall Islands that can be traced to Earhart’s Electra,” said Carol Linn Dow, a Texas pilot and Earhart author who helped produce a new DVD video that features the artifacts. Carol added, “There’s no evidence of any U.S. or Japanese aircraft being shot down or disabled in that part of Milli Atoll. So where would these artifacts have come from? In all likelihood, it came off Earhart’s plane.”

After listening to countless stories from the Marshallese and what happened at Milli Atoll, Dick Spink went on to shoot film on the actual crash site of Earhart's airplane. He completed four very important interviews with the people of the Marshall Islands.

The interviews are revolutionary especially the testimony of a Marshallese native, Shikaro Lajuan, who's father and Jororro actually witnessed the crash of Earhart's airplane on the reefs at Milli. Not only did they witness the crash, the natives of Milli Atoll took the two downed flyers to an adjacent island, Tokowa, and gave them food and water along with first aid for Fred Noonan's infected leg.



Recently Ric Gillespie and the Tighar group has been posting story after story about Amelia Earhart crashing at Gardner Island (renamed Nikumaroro) directly south of Howland Island. However, Gillespie and the Tighar group do not have eye witnesses of the crash or natives who saw what happened after the crash that can backup their story.

Gillespie, speaking for Tighar, recently made the statement that the artifacts Dick Spink found "Probably fell off a Japanese airplane flying over the Milli Atoll area." The problem is 45 degree wrinkles only occur after an airplane has been in a severe stress situation where the skin or attached plates have been severely twisted such as a crash. The dust cover off the wheel assembly was internally housed. The only way

it could come loose is if the entire wheel assembly was destroyed after making contact with the ground.

The story that Dick Spink brings to the forefront is the only story where there were actual eye witnesses to the crash.

Gillespie and the Tighar group cannot make claims of eye witness sightings. Carol Dow and Ric Gillespie are good friends, and they have cooperated on numerous occasions. The problem is where did the airplane crash? The airplane can't be in two places at the same time. Who has the right story? Carol would come back and say, "Ric will never find Earhart's airplane at Nikumaroro. It isn't there."

To make matters worse, there are two competing stories about artifacts from Earhart's airplane floating around the news services. Gillespie has a piece of metal about 18in.x 24in. with rows and rows of rivets that he claims "fell off" Earhart's Electra on a reef at Nikumaroro. Carol Dow talked with the shop manager at Wichita Air Service, Newton, Kansas, who was asked his opinion of the metal sheet.

Leeb Von Flange, whose shop is rebuilding a L-10 for shipment overseas with whom Gillespie consulted, replied, "From what I saw there were no signs of corrosion on the metal, several of the rivet holes looked as if they had been drilled out, and it would have been impossible for 130 rivets to pop out all at once." Consequently, there is grave doubt as to the provenance of Gillespie's piece of sheet metal. Irrespective of the metallurgical content, Gillespie and Elgen Long, a veteran Earhart researcher, have been arguing for decades over the piece of aluminum found there. Long says the piece obviously comes from the wing of a PBY, a U.S. military seaplane.

The story the Marshall Islanders tell is that Amelia Earhart's airplane crashed at Milli Atoll. Amelia Earhart and her navigator were taken to Tokowa and given food and water. Several days later Japanese soldiers arrived and took them prisoner. The airplane was winched off a reef at Milli Atoll and onto the back of a barge where it was towed to a tramp steamer, the *Koshu Maru*, standing by offshore.

What happened to the airplane in the thereafter is an unknown. Some sources say it was taken to the island of Saipan and destroyed in World War II. Some sources believe it was taken to the Japanese aircraft factories in Tokyo. It has never been seen since. A few parts fell off the Electra at Milli while it was being towed to the *Koshu Maru*. According to Dick Spink, "that may be all we will ever be able to find of the Earhart airplane...just a few scattered parts on the reefs of Milli Atoll."

Explorer Dick Spink and book author Carol Dow teamed up to create "*Amelia Earhart Mystery*." They believe the DVD will have a lasting impression on the Earhart story. The filming work was done entirely in the Marshall Islands and at North Sound Aviation, Sedro-Woolley, Washington. It was made under the auspices and with the permission of the people and the government of the Marshall Islands. In the DVD that was produced you will see the actual clearing on the reef where the

Japanese hauled the wrecked Electra to the *Koshu Maru* standing by offshore. No other research groups, including Tighar, have laid claims to having eye witnesses who saw the crash and later witnessed Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, on board the *Koshu Maru* at the port of Jabor, Marshall Islands. It was at Jabor where Noonan's infected wounds from the crash were dressed by a Japanese medic. The Japanese medic, Bilimon Amran, settled in the Marshall Islands after the war and became a respected member of the community.

The most popular and the most often used excuse explaining the disappearance of Amelia Earhart has been the theories dubbed with the title of "crashed and sank." Carol would say, "They took the easiest way out. Ninety five percent of these people (with exceptions) who write books and make movies know nothing about airplanes and the problems of radio navigation or the events that took place in the Marshall Islands. They just dropped her off in the ocean, and that's the end of it. The easy way out. What a travesty of justice this is."

According to Felix Girard, executive Producer of *Mystery*, "the discoveries in the Marshall Islands are new, they are exciting, and now for the first time the public has something they can really bite their teeth on. We originally thought the public would bite into the post loss transmissions and Almon Gray's Affidavit as it appears in Carol Dow's book, *The Lost Flight of Amelia Earhart*. Nonetheless, the current effort appears to be even better yet. Perhaps now we really have the chance to boost the story of Amelia Earhart with the new discoveries from the crash that took place at Milli Atoll in the Marshall Islands".

Notes: Amelia Earhart Mystery DVD can be purchased at:

www.AmeliaEarhartMovie.com
www.AmeliaEarhartMystery.com
www.LostFlight.net

FOR MEMBERS OF THE PRESS ... Please email Executive Producer Felix Girard (fgirard@lostflightgroup.com) or Carol Dow (Beardov@aol.com) for review copies of the DVD. The DVD is free to members of the press. Please include your mailing address and information about the publisher you represent.