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Ric Gillespie, *Finding Amelia: The True Story of the Earhart Disappearance*.

Annapolis, MD : Naval Institute Press, 2006. 276 pp. Forward by Mark Peattie, figures, photographs, epilogue, notes, index, resource library on DVD.

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Ric Gillespie's, *Finding Amelia: The True Story of the Earhart Disappearance* is a first-rate history of one of the greatest unsolved mysteries in recent times. With the help of the International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR), the author documents the flight path of Amelia Earhart and her navigator Fred Noonan as they attempted to fly around the world in a Lockheed Electra in the spring of 1937. This book reports on the miscalculations, faulty equipment and inaccurate information sent to Earhart while trying to safely land on Howland Island in the American Equatorial Islands .

On July 2, 1937 Earhart and Noonan vanished somewhere in the Central Pacific. Her last radio contact with the USS *Itasca* was at 0846, leaving Earhart a few hundred miles off course of Howland Island . For a little over two weeks, 'The greatest rescue expedition in flying history' was in the hands of the USS *Itasca*, *Colorado*, *Swan* and aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* (xiii). The navy ended its search on July 18th after covering thousands of miles of the Pacific Ocean . Having searched by sea and air, not a trace of Earhart or her Electra was found; the most likely place having been Gardener Island in the Phoenix Island group, northwest of Howland Island .

This book is a wonderful insight into the immense planning and cooperation put forth by the U.S. Government, Coast Guard and Navy for the publicity of one female aviator. Novice Earhart enthusiasts will be surprised to learn of the copious amount of time, money and support the American government and Armed Forces contributed to the Earhart expedition, including building two runways on Howland Island and repairing Earhart's Electra at the expense of the U.S. Navy. The reader may find Gillespie's radio focus to be overbearing at times but the importance of this topic is invaluable to understanding what went wrong on the last leg on Earhart's journey. Particularly interesting is Commander Thompson's view that Earhart's failure to answer radio calls was down to her arrogance, not miscommunication or the danger she may have been in.

A very interesting aspect of the Earhart disappearance was the number of amateur radio calls reported to have heard distress signals from Earhart after she went down. The chance of radio listeners in the U.S. receiving signals from the Electra was less than 1%. However, after investigations by the U.S. government, they found 16 year old Dana Randolph of Southern, Wyoming and 15 year old Betty Klenck of St. Petersburg , Florida to be credible. In the report compiled by Commander Warner Thompson of the *Itasca* , he doubted Earhart ever sent signals after 0846 on July 2nd.

One of the best features of *Finding Amelia* is the epilogue. It is only one page long but the information contained in the four paragraphs is compelling. For the first 240 pages the author does not argue for a particular theory as to what ultimately happened to the aviatrix, he simply states the facts and allows the reader to piece together parts of the puzzle. The epilogue's content indirectly expresses the author's belief that Earhart and Noonan died as castaways on an uncharted atoll in the Phoenix Islands . Whatever the reader believes the outcome to be, the end was undeniably terrible; drowning or slow dehydration and death.

The book also comes with a DVD of the most comprehensive collection of primary source information relating to the 1937 Earhart world flight attempts, disappearance, and search, ever assembled. The amount of information on the disc is

overwhelming and truly remarkable. It contains over five thousand documents used to explain the Earhart disappearance and examines her relationship with the U.S. Government. Ric Gillespie's, *Finding Amelia* is a brilliant read, essential for anyone interested in one of history's most debated mysteries.



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