

Fragment From Amelia Earhart's Plane Identified

(KAIR)--A group of researchers believe they have positively identified a fragment from the plane last flown by famed aviator and Atchison native Amelia Earhart.

New research conducted by The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, or TIGHAR, shows that the aluminum piece does in fact belong to the plane Earhart was flying when she disappeared in July 1937.

According to TIGHAR Executive Director Rick Gillespie, the group found the fragment in 1991 near an island in the Southwestern Pacific Ocean. He says they “always suspected that it was part of her airplane, we just could not pin it down. We could not find the place on her plane where it fit, and it was very frustrating. We worked with the National Transportation Safety Board, the Air Force Museum Restoration Shop...everybody we could think of.

Gillespie says the breakthrough came recently when they realized that there was one part of her plane that was unique and not built by the manufacturer. It turns out that the fragment was a patch that was put over a hole where there was a special, custom designed window Amelia had placed there. Gillespie says that “when she was in Miami, before her second attempt to fly around the world...for some reason, nobody knows why, she had this special window removed, and this simple aluminum patch fabricated and put over the hole.

Further evidence was revealed when researchers started to look at photographs that showed the patch. When they examined the photos in detail, they saw a piece of metal that looked exactly like the piece of metal they had. They compared that patch to an existing Electra aircraft that is being restored in Newton, KS. They were able to confirm that everything matched up to the structure of the airplane.

TIGHAR is planning another expedition to the island next year to examine an object underwater that they believe to be the complete airplane.

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