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[Intro]

Joe-Hi there. Welcome again to another episode of Thinking Sideways. I am your host, Joe, joined as always by...

D-Devin.

Joe-And...

Steve-Steve.

Joe-All right, so we're going to talk about a really fun mystery this week. We're going to talk about Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan, and what happened to them, possibly.

D-Maybe.

J-Yeah.

S-Theoretically.

J-Yeah. So I'm sure you've heard about Amelia, but just in case you haven't, I'll just give you a brief rundown. She was an early female pioneer of aviation, and she flew across the Atlantic, for example. I think the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. And she was on, when she disappeared, she was on a round the world flight.

D-She would have been the first woman.

J-Yeah, to fly around the world.

D-I like, you just sound very unimpressed. Like, I guess she's...(Steve laughing).

J-Yeah.

D-"I don't know, she was an important female figure in history."

J-Yeah, yeah, yeah. Probably.

S-What Joe's trying to do, is that we're trying to give just a real brief overview of Amelia.

J-Yeah.

D-Uh huh.

S-Because there's so much to this story, I think is probably why you're getting that (laughing).

D-Hm, uh huh.

J-Yeah, yeah.

D-Uh huh, uh huh.

J-Yeah, I mean, if you go to her Wiki page, you can read all about her life, so by all means, do that if you want to, but uh...

D-Do that instead.

J-Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. And also, Fred Noonan was her navigator. He was considered one of the best navigators around, and he was also a licensed ship captain, had a ton of experience with marine and flight navigation.

D-Excuse me, is.

J-What's that?

D-Is. Maybe.

J-Oh, that's true, he might still be alive, yeah.

S-Possibly. Yeah.

J-Good point. Ok, sorry about that. And yeah, Amelia and Fred, if you're out there listening, drop us a postcard.

D-Yeah.

J-So...

S-Cause so many people still use those.

J-I know. Anyway, on July 2, 1937, he and Amelia were heading out over the Pacific Ocean on their third to last leg of their round the world trip.

D-Ugh.

J-Yeah. And they were going to try to find a tiny little piece of land called Howland Island. You can find it on Google if you want.

D-Joe did.

J-Oh, before I go any further, I want to acknowledge that this was suggested by a couple of people, Ash and also Jeremy.

D and S-Yeah.

J-Right? So thanks guys.

D-Long time ago.

J-Yeah.

S-Yeah, it's been on the list for quite awhile.

J-Yeah, it has. One of our first suggestions, I think.

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah. Well, ok, the around the world trip began in Oakland, California. It went eastward. In 1937 people had already flown around the world, so Amelia decided to set herself apart by following an extra-long 20,000 mile equatorial route.

D-And also being female.

J-Oh, and also that too, yeah.

D-Yes.

J-Yeah. She got financing from Purdue University, and Lockheed Aircraft built her a custom Lockheed Electra 10 airplane...

S-Which is pretty cool.

J-Yeah...

S-Get your own fancy, custom plane.

J-I know, yeah.

D-I mean, yeah, but on the other hand, like, don't you want the model that's been tested?

S-Yeah, I was going to say...

J-You probably do.

S-...you never, you never, you never use first gen tech.

D-You don't ever use first gen tech.

J-Yeah. I'm not sure how long the Lock...the Electra had been around at that time.

D-Well but even if you just add an extra fuel tank, you want one that's, like, been around a couple times.

J-Oh yeah.

D-That's my rule at least.

J-Yeah. So yeah, the extra big fuel tank was one thing, but what strikes me as strange about this, is that they didn't incorporate a navigation dome.

D-What's a navigation dome?

J-Because in the old days, before they had all this fancy stuff that we have these days, you had to use a sextant, like when you're flying at night, actually get a fix on a star...

D-Oh.

S-Skylight in the top of a plane, basically.

D-Oh.

S-Like bubbles.

D-Ok.

J-Like a hemispheric glass bubble that they built into the tops of a lot of planes back in those days.

D-Ok.

J-And why they didn't build one into this plane, I don't know, but it would have been a good idea.

D-For fun.

J-Yeah.

S-I think it's because they were relying on the technology they had of the new radios, and stuff like that. They thought, I don't think they felt like they needed it as much.

D-First gen tech.

J-Yeah, yeah. It seems like they were going to use radio direction finding technology in this particular little thing...

S-Uh huh.

J-...of Amelia's, but it didn't really work out too well.

D-Was there, is there some consideration for aerodynamics as well? Like, were they trying to make the plane more aerodynamic?

J-Uh, it's conceivable, I don't know.

D-To extend the fuel life?

J-Yeah.

D-I don't know.

S-That's a, that's a good question.

D-Yeah.

J-That, that is. I don't know.

D-Thank you.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah.

J-The first try, this actually was her second try at the around the world thing.

S-Yeah.

J-Yeah. She tried one time before, and she flew from Oakland to Honolulu successfully.

D-Good.

J-Yeah.

S-So that means that she was flying from east to west.

J-East to west, yeah.

S-Instead of what she ended up doing in the end, which was flying the opposite way.

J-To the west, yeah, exactly.

S-West to east.

J-Yeah. In Honolulu, she was taking off for her second leg.

D-Uh huh.

J-And she had an unfortunate incident, and it's still a little controversial. She ground looped, essentially. Which meant that on take off, one wing tip caught the ground and she just sort of spun around and did a huge amount of damage to her plane.

S-Did it, did it spin around? I always got the impression that the ground loop is where one hits and then, you know, it's the equal and opposite reaction. It pushes it the other way, and so they waggle back and forth. Cause you've seen planes, I've seen planes doing that when they're taking off...

J-Uh huh.

S-...and they'll, they kind of one tip, then the other wing tip, back and forth.

J-Uh huh, I know.

S-On their central axis.

D-Oh, I guess...

J-No, it's actually, it's defined as a rapid rotation of a plane in the horizontal plane.

S-Oh, so it is spinning.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah, so my impression is it's, like, one wing gets caught, basically.

S-And it pivots.

J-Around, yeah.

D-Yeah.

S-Ok, ok. Then that's where I misunderstood it.

J-Yeah. Anyway, the plane was severely damaged.

S-Oh yeah.

J-It had to be shipped back to California to be fixed, and it's controversial. I mean, I mean...

D-That's a lot of damage.

J-Yeah. Amelia claimed that her right tire blew out, which may or may not be true. And other people have blamed pilot error, so...

D-Hm.

J-She's controversial. There might, might be a certain amount of bias with some of these people who said that she was not so hot of a pilot after all.

D-Hm.

S-Well, I was going to say, that's a lot of the problems with this story, is that people are holding back because either they think she, because she was a woman she wasn't a good pilot, or because she was a woman pilot, they don't want to point out any of her flaws in her abilities.

D-Uh huh.

J-Uh huh, yeah.

S-It's a weird, it's a weird catch-22.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah, it kind of is. Oh, and also there was some mention in a story at the end of 1937 that supposedly, Fred Noonan had told his wife he had just recently remarried, told her about the blowout, if it was a blowout...

S-Uh huh.

J-...that he didn't think it was an accident. He thought it was sabotage.

D-Oh (Steve laughing).

J-Yeah.

S-Ok.

J-But I'll talk about, I'll talk a little bit more about this article. It was in *True* magazine. I think that's probably what it should not be called, but it's a really great article (Steve laughing).

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah. Ok anyway, back to the second, back to our trip.

S-The, so...

J-The second try.

S-...her second attempt.

J-Yeah. Second try. They leave Oakland for Miami, and then at Miami they made the fateful decision to remove their trailing antenna, which really might have saved their bacon later.

D-Joe, what's a trailing antenna?

S-Thank you Devin, I was going to ask the same thing.

J-Exactly.

D-I will just do that for this entire episode (Steve laughing).

J-Evidently. Yeah, I was going to explain that. A trailing antenna is something that you, in those days at least, antennas were less sophisticated.

S-Uh huh.

J-So generally speaking, and I'm not an expert on radios at all, but my understanding of this is that in order to broadcast on the 500 kilohertz band...

D-Uh huh.

J-...which is the marine distress band, I think, you have to have, you have to have an antenna of a certain length.

D-Sure.

J-And it'd be too much of a longer antenna than you could actually accommodate inside or mounted on the fuselage of it. So it's got to be longer, so what you do is, it's a long wire antenna with a lead weight on the end. And then you...

S-Toss it out the window, essentially?

D-Yeah.

J-No, no (laughing). You deploy it out a hole in the back (Steve laughing).

D-Uh huh, so toss it out the window (laughing).

S-Toss it out the window.

J-No, there's a hole in the fuselage in the back and then...

D-Uh huh, toss it out the window.

J-...it's got an electric winch, yeah.

D-Yeah, uh huh.

J-And so you, after you take off, you deploy it, and then before you land, you better remember to reel it back in.

D-Pull it back up.

S-Or you destroy it.

D-So why, what would be the reason that one would disconnect that? It seems like it's a fairly innocuous thing.

J-Yeah. Apparently, I guess they felt it was just too much of a nuisance to have to reel it in every time you land the plane.

S-So...

D-So why not just not deploy it?

S-Not deploy it, yeah. That was my question.

J-Just not deploy it? Yeah.

D-It doesn't seem like it's a tremendously heavy thing.

J-Yeah, no, I know.

D-I mean, it's not like weighing them down a whole lot.

S-It's probably got a, it's probably a couple of pounds total in weight, so yeah.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah. Just don't eat a couple of meals, maybe, and you're accommodated.

J-Well, it's probably more than a couple of pounds for the electric winch and everything else, but you know still, it wasn't that much. And it's a little inexplicable, you know. For me, I would want to have...

S-Everything.

J-Yeah, I would just want to have that extra radio, you know, just in case any of the other radios just goes out.

D-Yeah.

J-You know, a big part of the problem with this whole thing for Amelia and Fred is that their radio wasn't quite working right.

D-Uh huh.

J-And that kind of hosed them in the end.

S-First gen tech.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah. And just a brief mention here, they were talking, before they hired, or brought Fred on to the project, they were talking to another navigator whose name was Bradford Washburn.

S-Uh huh.

J-And they asked him, it was Amelia and her husband were asking him, “Well, we want to go from New Guinea to Howland Island. It's going to be really tough to find. What do you think we need to do?” And he said, “You have to have a trailing antenna for communications, and you have to have a radio operator on the island.” Amelia didn't want to go with the trailing antenna.

D-Uh huh.

J-And so he backed out.

D-Hm.

S-Oh.

J-So yeah, smart move, dude.

D-Interesting.

J-Yeah.

S-For him.

D-Yeah, ok.

J-I'm sure he was patting himself on the back.

D-Yeah.

J-He probably wasn't happy about it, but you know, still. The, so the jump from Lay, or excuse me, not Lay, from Lae, Papua New Guinea, it's a town on the east coast of Papua New Guinea. As I said, the third to last leg was expected to take at least 18 to 20 hours. And the Electra was capable of flying 24 hours under ideal conditions if the tanks were full. And I've heard varying accounts of this, most say that the tanks were full when they left Lae, but I've also seen a few other accounts that say that no, she only had about 950 gallons of gas.

D-Well, how much was the tank? Sorry.

J-The tank, I've heard varying estimates about that.

S-Eleven, twelve hundred?

J-Yeah, eleven to twelve hundred.

D-So she had like, what? Eighty percent, is that eighty percent?

J-Yeah. I don't know, around there. Yeah.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah, but apparently it was a grass airstrip at Lae, and it was only 3000 feet long, and apparently, according to some authorities that I've heard, she couldn't take off with much more weight than she had.

D-Uh huh.

J-And they actually off-loaded a bunch of weight just so they could, you know, make it up with fuel. So they took some stuff off at Lae. The Navy was cooperating with the mission. The Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* was stationed at Howland Island, and also the tug the *USS Ontario* was stationed midway between Lae and Howland. And then the *USS Swan* was stationed beyond Howland Island to the east, so the Navy was participating...

S-So they had a line of ships to be able to communicate with...

J-Uh huh.

S-...as they got close, when they got there, and if they overshot, somebody could still talk to them.

D-Hm.

J-Yeah, or go rescue them if they had to ditch or something like that.

D-Ok, yeah.

S-True.

J-So yeah.

D-That's nice of the Navy.

J-That was awfully nice of them, yeah.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah. It was an overnight flight. It was scheduled to arrive at Howland Island early in the morning of July 2nd. So they left July 2nd, they arrived July 2nd.

D-Hm.

J-International Date Line.

D-Hm.

S-Oh, ok.

D-Right, ok.

J-Yeah. And so they left at 10 am, which is at zero, Greenwich Mean Time.

D-Ok.

J-So all the times I'm going to be giving from here on in are Greenwich Mean Time, cause I don't know if you guys noticed this when you researched this...

D-It's hard.

S-Oh, it's screwy.

D-Yeah.

J-It's really hard, because there's half-hour time zones over there, and they're talking local time Lae,

local time at Howland, and then they're mixing it in with Greenwich Mean Time, and oh my God, it's confusing.

D-Yeah, so, actually this is interesting. My brother is currently in New Zealand working.

J-Uh huh.

D-And so they are three hours behind us, but they're in tomorrow.

S-A day ahead. Yeah.

J-Uh huh.

D-Yeah. So it's very interesting trying to have, you know, Skype conversations with him, because it's like, I don't, I literally cannot conceptualize of what time it is there (laughing). Because it seems like it's in the future, so I, you know...

S-It is in the future.

D-Well, I kind of had this same thing happening with this...

J-Uh huh.

D-Because it was kind of like, I don't know, I can't get a good bead on it, so good on the Greenwich Mean Time.

J-Yeah.

D-It's good that we're just going to do it all in one time.

S-Yeah, please. Keep this simple.

D-Yeah.

J-Let's do it, yeah. Ok, back to Howland Island. So the morning that Amelia and Fred were due in at Howland Island, the *Itasca* reported weather conditions as, “Clear blue sky to the south and the east, but heavy cloud banks to the north and the west.”

D-And the *Itasca's* the one that was at the island?

J-That was at the island, yeah.

D-Yeah, ok.

J-And so, yeah, so. Yeah, so not the ideal weather conditions for finding a tiny island in the middle of nowhere when you're flying through that cloud bank.

S-And so the plane was flying towards the cloud banks?

J-Yeah, it was flying...

D-Through.

J-It was flying through them.

S-Ok.

J-Yeah, so they were to the west of Howland Island. There were a very, a decent number of radio messages, but I'm not going to list them all.

D-Hm.

S-There's a lot.

J-There were a lot. When they were getting close to Howland, at 17:47 GMT, Amelia radioed, “We're 200 miles out. Please take a bearing on our signal.” And she started whistling into the microphone.

S-So that the, there would be a tone for them to track, right?

J-Yeah, yeah. Just a steady noise for them to track.

D-Uh huh.

J-And the thing about it is, is they replied to her, but they never got an acknowledgment of the message.

D-Hm.

J-In fact, they never got acknowledgments of any of their messages to her over the radio, which indicates to me her receiver was not working.

D-Hm.

J-That's what is widely believed, is her receiver antenna had gotten damaged on take off. So about this time the *Itasca* fired up its oil burners and generated a big column of black smoke.

D-Oh, that's a good idea.

J-Yeah. The commander of the ship said later that should have been visible for 40-plus miles to the south and east.

D-Hm.

J-And if, *if* Amelia was flying at 1000 feet, which she said she was.

D-Uh huh.

S-Well, but I've also heard that if she was coming from slightly, you know, in a slight, I think it was a

slightly different direction, it could have very easily blended in with the clouds.

D-Uh huh.

J-Uh huh. Yeah, possible.

S-Depending on where she was. You know, it's funny, is I looked up this ship, and I was like, it's got guns. Why the hell weren't they just firing off shots to make a bunch of noise so she could home in on that?

J-That's not a bad idea.

D-Yes it is.

S-They didn't have guns at that time.

J-They didn't?

D-Oh, it didn't have guns.

S-It didn't. It got fitted for guns for World War II, is what I figured out.

D-Oh.

J-Yeah.

D-I was going to say, well what happens when it's the errant shot and you shoot the plane right out of the air? (Laughing).

S-Well, you shoot, you shoot blanks, you don't, you don't use live ammo (laughing).

J-That would be funny.

D-Yeah, ok. That's fair.

J-Yeah. Although I'm not sure, I mean, at miles away and with two really loud aircraft engines, you know, right next to you...

D-I don't know that you would hear, yeah.

S-That's true.

J-Yeah, I don't know you'd be able to hear.

D-So actually I have one quick question before we move on from this.

J-Oh ok, yeah.

D-It was documented that Amelia did have, like, the kind of training, right, that she would know you

have to respond when people radio you right?

J-Yeah.

D-And there was documented that she had done that in the past, right?

J-Uh, yeah, as far as I know. Yeah.

D-Ok, I just wanted to make sure. I mean, you know, there's so much talk about her maybe not being a great pilot, and blah blah blah. I mean, I would think that everybody would know if somebody radios you, you at least acknowledge that you got it.

J-Oh yeah, yeah.

D-But it occurs to me that maybe she just didn't know that? But...

J-Yeah, she was a...

D-So I just wanted to make sure.

J-Yeah. Well, she was accused of not following correct procedures, radio procedures later on, but.

S-I...

D-I just wanted to make sure so if we're going forward with this that it does seem reasonable that she wasn't actually receiving the calls.

J-Oh yeah.

D-Not that she was just choosing to not respond.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah.

S-The other thing that I know of is, in reading, is because this radio system was different than what she was used to.

J-Uh huh

S-And she, one account that I read, it was like she got a half hour of training on it.

D-Hm.

J-Yeah.

S-At Lockheed, is that who made this?

J-Yeah, yeah.

S-Yeah, they, when she was picking it up, they gave her a half hour walk through of how the radio worked.

D-Oh.

J-Yeah, and also her radio...

S-So if something wasn't right, she may not have known how to identify that or correct for it.

J-Yeah. It was like her radio direction finder, I think, is the one that she got just a really quick overview on and that was it.

S-Uh huh.

D-Yeah. Well, so and I guess it's also possible she wasn't totally clear on how it worked, and she may have thought she was hitting the button the right way, or thought she was holding her head the right way, and she wasn't.

S-Uh huh.

J-Yeah.

D-And nobody's saying to her, “Hey, did you hear what we're saying?”

J-Uh huh.

S-If her headphones were unplugged the whole time and she had no idea the mixer was off (D and J laughing), she didn't know.

J-There you go. Yeah, yeah.

D-Ok, so, all right, sorry. Let's keep going.

J-Oh yeah, back to what the commander said, he said that it was doubtful that the smoke would have been visible for more than 20 miles to the north and west, which is where she was coming from. Ok, back to the messages, 18:17 GMT, she radios that they were a hundred miles out and low on gas. And along about this time her voice was starting to get a little bit of an edge in it, I hear.

D-I can imagine.

S-Understandable.

J-Yeah (laughing). Yeah, but this is the part I find a little inexplicable, is why it was, you know, she must not have been getting any messages from the *Itasca* or anybody else.

S-Uh huh.

J-So at that point, don't you conclude that your receiver is busted and turn around and go back to Lae? Isn't that what...

D-Not if you're running low on gas.

S-Well, I was going to say, Joe, she's been going for 18 hours...

D-How far out is she?

J-Well, no, no, no. I'm not saying at this point. She must have known earlier in the flight, well, you know, well before the half way point, that her receiver wasn't working.

S-Oh.

J-How could you not deduce that your receiver...

D-Well, do we know, was there a storm?

J-Uh yeah, there was a storm.

D-Any kind of interference that could have knocked them out midflight? So they wouldn't have known that they weren't receiving?

J-So suddenly they didn't find out that they weren't receiving until, that's possible...

D-Until they suddenly weren't receiving from the ship and they were like, “Well, we are too far now to turn around, so we're just going to have to go.”

S-Point of no return.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah, that could have been. Maybe they got struck by lightning or something like that, I don't know.

D-Or even, I mean, I don't know, maybe a duck hit it or something. I mean, not a duck, you know what I mean.

J-Yeah (laughing).

S-A sea faring duck.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah, something like that, you know (Steve laughing).

J-Yeah.

D-You know? But is that, is that a reasonable thing to say, to counter with that?

J-The prevailing theory is that it was damaged on take-off and it wouldn't have been working the entire

flight.

D-Sure.

J-And so...

S-So they should have figured something out, like when they were communicating with the tower, and not hearing the tower in Papua New Guinea responding to them? Yeah.

J-Uh huh.

D-Yeah.

J-I mean, so yeah. But anyway, for whatever reason they just...

D-They just kept going.

J...they journeyed on. I think that, maybe they figured that they could, maybe they'd be able to find this place, you know?

D-Yeah.

J-And certainly if the weather had been better, you know? The weather didn't help at all. They had a head wind for one thing.

D-Hm.

J-So back to the messages here. They got their last message on the *Itasca* at 20:14 GMT. She said that they were on a line, I think it was a line of position, 157 slash 337.

S-Can you explain what that means? I'm still not a hundred percent positive that I understand.

J-Yeah.

D-Oh, I definitely don't understand.

S-What do those numbers mean?

J-157, ok, so...

S-That's latitude and longitude?

J-No, no, no. That's, you know, you know that in a circle there's 360 degrees, right?

S-Right.

D-What?! (Steve laughing).

J-Yeah, right, exactly. And so zero on that circle is north.

S-Right.

J-180 degrees is south.

S-Ok.

J-So 157 degrees is like south southeast.

D-Ok.

J-Ok.

S-Ok, so I've never done bearings like this.

D-Yeah, I haven't either.

S-So that's why I was a little confused by what they were saying.

J-Yeah.

D-So they're south southeast of what?

J-Yeah. So south is, south southeast is between south and south east.

D-Right, I know, I know. But it's, and then what's the 337?

S-They can't give their position because they don't exactly know it?

J-Yeah. 337 is just the opposite. Like north northwest.

D-Oh, so she was either going south south...

J-So that's the thing. She didn't say what direction on that line that they were going.

D-Oh they were, oh I see. Ok.

J-Yeah.

D-Ok.

J-Yeah, and so it's believed that what, what Fred Noonan had done was, what he was going to do was get them out there, take a bearing off the sun or however he could get a bearing.

D-Uh huh.

J-Presumably the sun. And determine their longitude. So if they're at the correct longitude for the island, for Howland Island, then they make a right turn, and head down that line to hit the island.

D-Uh huh.

J-But, you know, that's, that's theoretically what he was doing.

D-I see. Ok.

J-Yeah. So I assume that they were running south on that line, but we actually don't know. She didn't say.

S-Ok.

D-Uh huh. And they may, frankly, they may not have really known either, right?

J-Oh, they would have known but, they would have known which direction they were going, but you know, we just have no way of knowing if they were going north on that line...

D-Oh yeah, right. Of course they would have known. I'm sorry. I don't know...

J-Yeah, they must have known, yeah (laughing).

D-...what I'm thinking. I'm being a dummy. Ok so, and that was the correct longitude for the island? Latitude? Longitude?

J-Longitude. It appears not because they never showed up (Steve laughing). So, she also said at the end of that message, she said that she was switching to 6210, a different frequency. The *Itasca* radioed back, telling her not to change her frequency, but apparently she did anyway, because that's the last they ever heard of her.

D-Did she, did they switch frequencies?

J-I don't know why they couldn't just switch over to 6210, really. I'm not sure...

S-They may not have had the radio to do that.

J-They may not have. That might have been part of the problem. I mean, radios, radios back in those days were a lot more crude then they are today.

S-Uh huh.

D-Yeah, for sure.

S-Very narrow bandwidths.

J-Yeah.

D-I guess for me, my initial reaction is always like, she was in a small plane. Like, they had a giant naval ship. Really? The radio on her plane was more sophisticated than theirs? But again, you're right. You make a good point that the ship is...

S-The ship was not new at that time.

D-No, but it's, you know.

S-So they may have gotten the latest radio technology ten years prior.

D-Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah, I, yeah. So it's a good point that you guys are bringing up, because it is totally my impulse to be, like, what do you mean her plane was more advanced than a giant battleship? I don't get it (Steve laughing).

J-Yeah. No, I know.

D-But you're right, you're right.

J-I'm not really sure what the issue was there. You know, you would think they would have the capability of operating on a bunch of different frequencies, including that one. But it might be that their radio was busted.

D-Yeah.

J-You know?

D-Or it was old.

J-Yeah.

S-Well then, certain frequencies are only used in certain areas, you know? On land versus sea, stuff like that.

J-Yeah.

S-So I, I mean, I'm completely ignorant here. I know that it's done, this practice.

J-Yeah, yeah. We're going to get a lot of hate mail from ham, ham radio operators.

D-Probably.

S-They're going to kill us.

J-Yeah, I know. I know. But actually, there were three more messages. I mean, 20:14 GMT is the one that's always listed as the last one, but I read that actually the radio operator at Nauru, which was back at the halfway point, that island on 6210 did hear three more messages.

D-Hm.

J-At 20:31, 20:33, and 20:54 GMT.

S-So within the span of about a half hour?

J-Uh huh, yeah.

D-And what did...

J-Well, I don't know what the contents were, I've never been able to find that. But he did send a telegram that was, that eventually made it to the Coast Guard about the messages. He, he mentioned the last message. He said that the last message sounded just like the person in the previous messages, but that the person was shouting and the sound of the airplane's engines, which had been present in previous messages, was gone. So I'd probably be shouting too.

D-I would too.

J-Yeah (laughing).

D-Yeah, absolutely.

J-Yeah.

S-A lot of things.

D-Yeah.

J-So that is what we know about, about Amelia. That's the last we heard of her. And there's a lot of theories out there, and they started almost immediately.

D-Of course.

J-Yeah.

S-She was, she was a very public figure.

J-Oh yeah.

D-And she was doing a very public thing.

S-Yeah.

J-Oh yeah. You'll recall, I mentioned that article in *True* magazine.

D-Yeah.

S-Uh huh.

J-Yeah, yeah, ok.

S-The not so true article.

J-Yeah, that's one of the first theories that came out is that they were assassinated.

D-Hm.

J-Yeah. So that was in the December, 1937 issue of *True* magazine. It claimed that Amelia and Fred were spying for the US government.

S-We're in theories section, by the way.

J-Oh yeah, yeah, we are in the theories section.

S-Ok.

J-Yeah, yeah. Sorry about that. I should have made that clear.

S-Just making sure.

J-Yeah, yeah. This article notes that it was very risky to make the hop to Howland Island and it would have made more sense to travel around the Pacific Rim like, say, Japan, the Aleutians, Seattle...

S-If you ignore completely what they were doing, yeah you're right.

J-Yeah, well she wanted to do the whole equatorial thing, first of all.

D-Uh huh.

S-Yeah.

J-Yeah, I know. But still, you know, there's a good point. I mean, trying to find Howland Island in the middle of a vast ocean was kind of risky. And so obviously, they were suspicious, *True* magazine, of why they took this very risky route. And the answer, they believe, was that they had something in their possession that they didn't want the Japanese to see.

D-Hm.

J-Yeah. Apparently they'd been doing a lot of spying on their around the world trip and they had a lot of top secret info that needed to be delivered to the US government...

D-In, like, in the form of, like, developed pictures, is that what they're saying?

S-Undeveloped film.

J-Oh, who knows, you know.

D-Undeveloped, yeah.

J-Yeah.

D-I guess...

S-It has to be undeveloped. They don't have a processing booth in the plane (laughing).

D-I know, but that's my argument against this theory, because it's like, well, but if it's undeveloped film, then they can just say, “Yeah, we've been taking pictures of our world record journey.”

J-Uh huh. Yeah, I don't know.

S-”Why do you have 800 rolls of film?”

D-”Cause it's a long trip, ok?” (Steve laughing).

J-Yeah. “Why do you...”

S-”There's a lot of water to take pictures of.”

D-”I go to the bathroom and take, like, 12 selfies. I don't know what you want from me, ok.”

J-Yeah.

D-Sorry.

J-”But why are all the pictures all of, like, military installations?” Yeah (laughing).

D-I don't know, cause it all looks like military installations from a thousand feet. Right?

J-Yeah, that's true. Anyway, somebody, presumably the Japanese government, didn't want all that, all that good data delivered to the US government. So they used radio interference to make the direction finding gear on the airplane and the *Itasca* useless, and mess with their audio, also.

D-Hm. Which...

J-And the evidence for this is well, the US government did participate in Amelia Earhart's trip, what with stationing those three ships and everything. That's about it for evidence, though.

S-Yeah, ok, yeah. We...let's just ignore the fact that she was friends with the current First Lady at that time.

J-Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

S-You know, who she is and her connections had nothing to do with her being able to arrange all of that.

D-No. No, no.

J-Oh yeah.

D-Well, I mean, also it's not my impression, correct me if I'm wrong, that these naval ships were, like, usually stationed in New York, and made a huge trans-Atlantic journey all the way over to this, like, little area to be stationed in these areas. They were kind of, like, stationed in that general vicinity

anyway.

J-Yeah.

D-It was a short jog for them to just go plant themselves, you know, a hundred miles from where they usually were.

J-I don't know if they were stationed in the Philippines or, you know...

D-I mean...

J-Pearl Harbor. I don't know.

D-Right, but it's not as though...

J-But they weren't that far, yeah. It's not like they sailed half way around the world to get there.

D-Yeah. And you know, again, it's, like, kind of an exciting thing for the people who are on the ship, right? All of the...Marines?

J-Hm...

D-Navy men...

S-Navy men.

D-Navy men, sorry.

S-Seamen.

J-Maybe I didn't actually say this, but two of them were Navy ships, but the *Itasca* was a Coast Guard cutter.

S-Oh, that's right.

D-Ok, so anyway, for the men that were stationed on the ships, you know, it's something interesting for them.

J-Oh yeah.

D-It's helping an American citizen achieve a world record, you know.

J-Uh huh.

S-It's a famous American. Everybody wants to help.

D-It's a famous American, yeah. I mean, we do stuff like that all the time already still.

J-Yeah, totally. So yeah, I mean, it's not suspicious, so. And of course, this argument, or this article,

they did make a mention of Fred Noonan saying to his wife, supposedly, that they'd been sabotaged in Honolulu when they ground looped.

S-When did that article come out again?

J-December 1937.

D-So like...

S-Ok, and is that article the first mention of Fred Noonan's concern over Amelia's, or over sabotage? Is that where it came from?

J-Probably. That's the first that, that's the first that I know of.

S-Yeah, I've never seen it, I'd never seen it dated prior to that now that I think about it. It's like, I wonder if we've discovered where the source of it is?

J-Uh huh.

D-It wouldn't surprise me.

J-Yeah.

S-No.

J-Yeah. No, this is, this might be the first source for all the spying allegations and everything too, you know? It could be. Another source is there was a movie that came out in, I think, 1943 that was kind of loosely based on Amelia Earhart...

S-There's been several of them.

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah, well this one was, in this one she was spying for the US government.

S-Yeah.

J-And that sort of helped to put that whole “they were spying” thing into the popular consciousness.

D-Well so where, where are we saying they were spying? I mean, like, where along the Equator was, like, very tactical at that point?

J-That's...yeah, exactly. I mean...

S-The area that they disappeared in, it's there in the Pacific, there were islands that were under Japanese control at that time, but that's really the only thing. I mean, it's not like they would have gone to, let's say, Germany is the first one that pops into mind. That's way out of the way.

J-Yeah.

S-I mean, nobody major pops up as somebody I would say that you would need to be spying on.

J-Uh huh.

D-I would just say, like, again as a counter to that, not that any of us in this room, like, actually believe this, but I just really want to hammer it home, right.

S-Ok.

D-That's a really popular, in the public eye, long way to go about spying on tiny little islands that aren't really tactically relevant.

S-Uh huh.

D-Right?

J-Yeah.

S-Yeah.

J-I mean, they were, but...

D-But if you're going to have somebody spy, why would you be like, “Amelia Earhart is going for the world record of this thing. Everybody know this is exactly her...”

S-Best cover story ever.

D-”...this is exactly the way that she's going, so if you want to shoot her down, you know her course.” Why would you do that? Why would you do that? Why wouldn't you just throw somebody in the air and have them go for it?

J-Yeah, sure (Steve laughing).

D-Throw somebody in the air?

S-Yeah.

D-Yeah, I said that. You're right.

J-So, I guess we can say that the assassination theory was a fail.

S-Yeah.

J-Yeah.

D-(Makes raspberry noise).

J-Another one that's out there that is popular, and there's a lot. I didn't even incorporate every single theory into this.

S-Oh, this is one of the few time where's there's so many it's just...

J-There's so many.

D-So many.

S-...they're kind of grouped in generalities here.

J-Yeah. A lot of them are very similar to one another, too.

D-Yeah. And Joe's not Devin, so he didn't do the bullet point way.

J-Yeah.

S-Which is why it's really easy for me to understand.

D-Yeah.

S-So continue on, Joe (Devin laughing).

J-All right. Our next theory. They crashed on Saipan and were eventually killed by the Japanese.

S-Ok, yeah.

J-Another island that was under Japanese control at that time. And somebody has dug up quotes from locals in Saipan who supposedly saw two white people, a man and a woman. One woman who was a girl at the time said she saw a silver, twin-engine plane fly in low over the island, hit some trees, and then crash land on the beach. And then she got a look at the two people from the wreck, and they were white. And the woman she described as tall and thin with short hair, just like Amelia Earhart.

S-Did either of you, I, actually this is a little off topic but I found it interesting. It's just when you were talking about having short hair, I never realized why she had her hair cut in the style that she did. Did you, did you guys find that in the reading?

J-Uh uh, no.

S-You can't have long hair when you're flying an airplane cause you can't get it all underneath a cap easily.

J-Uh huh.

S-And so then, of course, it would be tangled and would break off anyway, over hours and hours and hours of flight time. So it was a giant pain in the butt, which is why she adopted the short hair style.

D-It's also kind of a hazard if you're, like, checking engines that are going and stuff.

S-Yeah.

J-Yeah.

S-Oh yeah, this is like, you know, don't have long, loose clothes on when you're working around machinery.

D-Uh huh. Don't wear a tie.

J-Uh huh.

S-Yeah (laughing).

J-Or maybe if you have to bail out of your plane it gets tangled in your chute and your chute doesn't deploy correctly, or God knows why.

D-Uh huh.

S-Yeah, I mean there's a bajillion reasons why, but I'd never thought of it.

J-There's probably lots of good reasons, yeah.

D-Yeah. That's cause you've never had to think about it.

S-I did once. I had long hair once...

J-Yeah.

D-I just mean as a man, not as a bald man.

S-...when I was 14.

D-Just as a man.

S-No, I once as a man had long hair.

D-Hm. At 14? Man?

S-Yeah, it was a rat-tail.

J-Hm.

S-Can we continue on?

D-Yes.

J-Yeah, ok.

S-Leaving my hair styles.

D-So what's the problem with this theory?

J-Well, Saipan is due north of Lae.

D-Yeah.

S-Yeah.

D-That's a pretty big one.

J-Yeah (laughing).

S-That's a real, real, gigantic navigational error.

J-Yeah.

D-Like even I wouldn't make that error probably.

J-Yeah, yeah. Also, in 1987 the Lieutenant Governor of Saipan said, in an interview on this topic, said that reporters were coming to the island and offering people money to say that they had seen two white people. And in 1937, there were white people living on Saipan. Somebody could, in good conscience, take the money and say, “Yeah, sure, I saw two white people.”

S-”I saw a whole bunch of them yesterday.”

J-Yeah, I know.

S-Yeah.

J-I got to give this one a fail.

S-Yeah (laughing).

D-Right.

S-I would totally agree with that.

J-Ok. This one is kind of a variant that actually has them wind up in Saipan after all. In fact, several of these have them winding up in Saipan for miscellaneous reasons, but this theory is that they took a detour over the Marshall Islands to do some spying for the government, and were shot down by the Japanese. The Japanese were occupying the Marshall Islands, and that's to the north of where all of our Amelia Earhart action is going on.

S-Uh huh.

J-Uh, well to the north. The US government had an interest in finding out what they were doing in those islands because it was suspected that they were fortifying the islands, which they weren't supposed to be doing. So anyway, so Amelia was enlisted to fly over the islands and spy on them. The Japanese shot them down and, supposing they survived the crash, eventually executed them.

D-Hm.

J-On Saipan.

S-Ok.

J-Yeah. In a magazine called *Air Classics*, a guy named, this was in April 1998, named Roland Reineck ...

S-Great name.

J-Yeah, I know, uh, revealed the following. This is a whole big stone wall cover up theory here...

D-Ok.

J-...of the whole thing. In April 1938, Paul Mantz, who had been a technical advisor for Amelia Earhart, wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt asking if she would use her influence to get him a copy of the official report of the cutter *Itasca*.

S-Cause they were good friends. Her and Eleanor.

J-Her and Eleanor, yeah. They were. Or at least if not good friends...

S-They were friends.

J-...they were friends, yeah. He had asked the Coast Guard for a copy of the report, but they said that they wouldn't release it to him.

S-He had to go through the right channels or something.

J-Apparently, yeah. So Eleanor sent the letter to Henry Morgenthau with a note. Henry Morgenthau was Secretary of the Treasury and one of FDR's closest advisors. And on May 13, 1938, and this eventually turned up, actually, in the files in the National Archives.

D-Hm.

J-Morgenthau called Eleanor Roosevelt and spoke with her secretary, and he said to her, and I quote, "This letter that Mrs. Roosevelt wrote me about trying to get the report on Amelia Earhart. Now, I've been given a verbal report. If we're going to release this, it's just going to smear the whole reputation of Amelia Earhart. If we ever release the report of the *Itasca* on Amelia Earhart, any reputation she's got is gone. Now, I know what the Navy did. I know what the *Itasca* did, and I know how Amelia Earhart absolutely disregarded orders, and if we ever release this thing, good-bye Amelia Earhart's reputation." Unquote. Now some people took this to mean that Morgenthau was thinking that her reputation would be ruined if people found out that she'd been spying for Uncle Sam.

D-I don't take it that way.

J-I don't take it that way. No.

S-I was going to say, am I the only one who feels like he's saying she screwed up?

J-Yeah (laughing).

D-Yeah. I mean, there's like, in the, even in the official story, right, it says, like, she changed frequencies, and obviously that...

J-She did, yeah.

D-...was, like, a huge misstep, right? She didn't...

J-She ignored instructions, yeah.

D-Yeah. And I'm sure...

S-If she could hear the instructions, she disregarded them.

D-Right.

J-Yeah.

D-But, like, why would you change...I guess...

S-If she couldn't hear them, then it's understandable she might have been following a process she had done before.

J-Yeah.

D-I guess it's also possible, it's just occurring to me, that she changed frequencies because she couldn't hear anything, and thought, ooh.

S-Good point, yeah.

J-Maybe that's it, maybe...

D-"They're not getting what I'm saying, so I better change frequencies." Yeah.

J-Maybe that's why she...

S-"I'll cycle through the frequencies and just keep going."

J-That's, not necessarily...yeah, not a bad idea.

D-But...

J-You know, it might be like what you're saying, you know, too with the whole thing about getting hit by lightning and having it go out halfway through...

D-Or something...

J-Maybe a fuse blew.

D-I mean, even like a piece of hail, you know.

J-Yeah, or a fuse.

D-A chunk of something.

J-Like I said, a fuse could have blown.

D-Yeah.

J-Maybe she just didn't know, I mean, it could've happened.

D-I do, I guess I do want to go ahead and state that, like, if your plane got hit by lightning, probably that'd be one of the first things you said as soon as you were within radio contact.

J-Uh huh.

D-If you thought anybody could hear you...

J-Yeah.

D-...you would say, “Hey, we got hit by lightning, so I don't know what's going on, but here's some information.” And then you wouldn't hear anything...

S-That would be in your status, absolutely.

D-...and then you'd say, “Hey, I got hit by lightning. Here's another update. We don't know what's going on.” Right? It does seem like you would mention that.

J-Yeah.

D-But, hey, who am I?

J-Yeah, I know.

D-Anyway, sorry. That's off topic.

S-I think that report would have been, “Oh my God, lighting, got hit by lightning, oh my God, oh my God, oh my God, lightning, oh my God!” (Joe laughing). Or something like that.

J-Yeah.

D-Or that you would want to, or maybe this is just my rational...

S-Yeah, I understand.

D-...you know, 20/20 brain, but...

J-It's perfectly ok, you know. If you go down, you just deploy your life raft and you're fine.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah. Yeah. Ok, where were we? Back to this article, Reineck goes on to, and by the way, this guy, this is really annoying when I was typing this up, this guy's name is spelled R-E-I-N-E-C-K. And every time I would type that, his name in, it would, autocorrect would turn it into “Redneck” (all laughing).

D-Yeah. So not “Redneck.” Reineck.

J-Yeah, yeah. I finally just gave up. He's Redneck (all laughing). Yeah.

D-Thanks, Google.

J-Yeah. His article also notes some gaps in the radio logs, which I don't find entirely all that suspicious, you know?

S-Yeah.

D-Uh huh.

J-And he makes note of a letter that had been received by the US Army saying that Amelia had been shot down by the Japanese. And then last of all he talks about a request from Senator Daniel Akaka of Hawaii in 1991 to Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady. Senator Akaka wanted to see Henry Morgenthau's files on Amelia, and Treasury Secretary Brady replied that the Morgenthau files had been sent to the National Archives. Well, that's suspicious, don't you think?

S-Why?

J-I know, that's what I'm wondering, why? (Laughing).

D-Right.

J-Yeah, he said...

S-Ok, I felt really dense there for a minute (laughing).

J-Reineck, yeah, Reineck saw it as a, basically as a cover-up, so Morgenthau stonewalls about Amelia, and then Brady stonewalls on Morgenthau. So, cover-up, cover-up. That to me doesn't prove a damn thing, but that's the way this guy spun the whole thing.

D-Hm.

J-Yeah. But the problem with this whole theory about spying on the Marshall Islands is if she had gone through the Marshalls and overflown a representative number of islands to see what the Japanese were doing, and then headed on down to Howland Island, she would have run out of fuel.

D-Uh huh.

J-That's a significant detour.

S-That's a big detour, yeah.

J-Yeah, yeah. And as it happens, it would have been even bigger, because the plane actually did fly over the island of Nauru and the way, half way out there, so it would have had to go half way to Howland...

S-They had visual confirmation of that?

J-Um, I think so, yeah.

S-Ok.

J-Or at least radio, but I think it was still light when she went over that, that island. After passing that island she would have had to basically turn left and head up to the Marshalls, do her spying, and then come back down, so it was an even more significant detour than just going straight there from Lae.

D-Also, wouldn't it have been night?

J-Uh, yeah.

S-Good film. Really good camera.

J-Yeah.

D-We don't have film that good.

J-Uh huh.

S-Yeah we do.

D-Nope.

J-Yeah.

S-Yeah we do.

D-I mean, I don't (Steve laughing).

J-Yeah.

D-I mean, probably the military does, but I don't.

S-They totally do.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah.

J-But they didn't have that kind of...

D-Not then.

S-No.

J-...capability back in those days.

D-Not in a place when they couldn't even change over to the right radio frequency they didn't.

J-Yeah. You would've had to put a really big flashbulb in the bottom of that plane (all laughing).

D-And it would have been probably reported.

J-Yeah. And then they would have been shot down.

S-As a UFO.

D-Right, have there been any UFO reports from that time in that area? (Steve laughing). No?

J-Yeah, it's her. Uh, yeah, anyway, back to the report. The report was kind of scathing. It was written by, you know, about...and that is, I've seen some excerpts from the report, and it was rather scathing, and so that's obviously the reason why Morgenthau didn't want to release it.

S-I think, I think part of it, though, is, is the, there was a certain level of sexism at that time towards that profession, and I'm sure that that really colored the report.

J-Uh huh, yeah.

S-Or influenced so that it was in the tone that it was in.

J-Yeah. There probably, there was some bias on the part, on the part of at least some of these people.

S-Uh huh.

J-There's no doubt about that. Yeah. Or I shouldn't say no doubt, I mean, there could have been. I don't know that there was. There probably was. Lastly on the spying theory, Amelia's family denies that she was doing any of that. Her sister said that they were very close and that there's no way that she would have not mentioned that to her or discussed it with her.

D-I'm just going to say, I'm just going to say again, it seems like a really, if you're trying to do something covert, why would you tack it on to something where you're literally publicizing the hell out of it.

J-Yeah, exactly (laughing).

D-You know?

J-And the fact of the matter is, is you know, there were plenty of ways to get spies in there to look around, so.

S-Yeah, this just seems like a weird cover story.

J-No, it's lame. I give this one a fail (Steve laughing). What do you guys think?

D-Yeah.

S-I love with Joe, it's a pass fail.

D-It's pass fail.

J-Yeah, basically.

S-No gray zone.

J-Ok, yeah, our next theory is that they couldn't find Howland Island so they crash landed on Mili Atoll in the Marshall Islands, which is, you know, on the south side of the chain. But it is controlled by the Japanese and the Japanese, you know, of course grab them and, you know, send them to Saipan and then eventually killed them. There are a fair number of people who actually buy into this theory. They would have had to have been way far off course to, uh, I mean, really far off course.

D-I, I guess my thing with that is that wouldn't, it seems like the Japanese would try to ransom them. Ransom them?

S-Not if they were hiding something. If they were hiding something they were doing...

D-But I don't think...

S-...they would not ransom those people off.

D-But I don't think that this theory says that they were hiding something, right? It was just that they accident, they were off course and they crash landed.

J-Yeah.

D-Right?

J-I thought you were talking about the Japanese hiding something.

D-Oh.

S-I was.

J-Yeah.

D-Are you talking about the Japanese hiding...

S-I was.

D-Oh.

S-You're saying that they weren't hiding anything, the Japanese find them, and would have then...

D-Tried to ransom them.

S-Ransom them off.

D-Yeah.

J-Uh huh.

D-Trade them for some other...

J-I don't think they would have even tried that. I mean, we were not at war with Japan at this time.

D-Yeah.

S-But we weren't under good relations.

D-We weren't friendly.

J-No, it wasn't the best, but we're not...

D-It's not like now.

J-It's not like we had the best relations with the Russians, but the Russians, if somebody crash landed on their territory, would probably just hand them back, you know?

S-It was cause they were civilian.

J-And I didn't mention this before. As you guys know, there was a huge search effort undertaken to find her.

S and D-Uh huh.

J-And they combed a huge amount of ocean looking for the plane, and they never found it. And two Japanese warships took part in that search effort.

D-Uh huh.

J-You know? And so.

D-Yeah, it does seem unlikely.

J-Yeah.

D-They would have probably said, “We have them.”

J-Well, if they, if they had something super secret on the atoll, but I've seen aerials of that, and it's just basically kind of a squarish sliver of land around a big lagoon. There's not much you can put there, militarily speaking.

D-Yeah.

S-And I know, I'm looking at your notes, but there's, there's people who say that, that they give accounts that these two were alive at some point with the Japanese.

J-Uh huh.

S-And that's the weird thing to me.

J-Yeah. And then, yeah, and so they captured them on the atoll and then they took them to Saipan.

S-Uh huh.

J-And eventually, so the story goes, they were both executed. Or Fred got executed and Amelia died of disease, or something.

D-Well maybe Amelia and Fred were actually spies for the Japanese.

J-That could have been. Maybe they're over living there right now.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah. Anyway, I don't know if you guys have any more thoughts on this? I give it a fail.

D-No, I agree.

J-I mean, their plane could easily have reached the atoll from where they left.

D-Uh huh.

J-I mean, but again it would be a massive, a massive error of navigation.

D-Uh huh.

J-But it could have, it could have reached it for sure.

D-Yeah.

S-Uh huh.

J-Nope, I don't think so, by going all the way over to Howland and then up. No. No way. Ok, fail. Another story that got out there is, I think this started about 1970, is that she survived and assumed a new identity in New Jersey.

D-Yeah.

S-Yeah.

D-She's living with, uh, with Tupac and Princess Diana, right?

J-And Dorothy Arnold, yeah (laughing).

D-Yeah, and Dorothy Arnold.

J-Yeah, exactly. Yeah, so this idea was floated in a book called *Amelia Earhart Lives*, published in 1970. The claim is that Amelia survived Japanese captivity, returned to the US after the war, where she moved to New Jersey and changed her name to Irene Bolam. And Irene, for her part, sued the publisher and got an out of court settlement for an undisclosed amount, and then the book was taken off the market. I've seen a picture of Irene, and she looks sort of like Amelia Earhart. Did you guys ever see that picture of her that's out there?

S-Uh, I want to say yes, but I don't remember it.

J-Not a perfect match I would say.

D-Not even a little bit of a match.

S-No, now with Devin showing it to me, yeah that's...she looks more like Princess Di than Amelia Earhart to me.

J-Yeah. Yeah, and so, you know, so I think this is an incredibly weak theory. How anybody could buy into it is beyond me, much less publish a book about it.

S-And why would Amelia Earhart do that?

J-Well, exactly. She liked publicity.

S-Yeah (laughing).

J-Yeah. And it's hard to imagine her living in obscurity voluntarily, because if she had come home after the war, she would have come home to a hero's welcome.

S-Uh huh.

D-Yeah.

J-It would have been huge. And then she could have, she could have written books. They would have made movies. I mean, seriously, it would have been a big deal.

S-Well, it was part of what she made part of her living from before she went on this.

J-Yeah.

S-Is that she was on a speaking tour.

J-Yeah. And writing books and stuff like that.

S-And writing books and stuff.

J-She was going to write a book about this, this around the world journey.

S-Yeah. Part of the reason to do this was to generate a, you know, money for the next five to ten years.

J-Yeah, yeah.

S-Yeah.

J-And so, so this is one of the most asinine theories I've ever seen. Do you guys agree?

S-Yeah.

D-Yeah, this is super dumb.

J-All right.

S-I believe you're going to say this is a fail?

J-It's a fail. Ok, now next theory.

S-Is this our last one?

J-No, not quite.

S-Ok.

J-Not quite.

D-(Sighs in frustration).

J-Yeah, yeah I know (Steve laughing). Uh, so this theory is there's an island 350 miles south southeast of our island, Howland, of Howland. A lot of people think that they crash landed on an island called Gardner Island, which is about 350 miles south southeast of Howland Island.

S-Uh huh.

J-There's a reef on the northwest corner of the island, and it's kind of flat. Flat enough to land a plane on. So it's believed that she could have landed that plane on the reef and actually been there for, you know, days or however long it took them, but they eventually died of thirst.

S-Uh huh.

J-So here's why so many people like this theory. You remember I talked about that line they were traveling on, 157 337?

S-Uh huh.

D-Yeah.

S-Or 153.

J-No, it's 157 337.

S-Ok.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah. Anyway, so they, if you draw that line through Howland Island, it almost, that bearing almost directly goes to Gardner Island.

D-Oh.

J-One reason people like it.

D-So it's past Howland Island?

J-Yeah, it would be south of there. Yeah.

D-Ok.

J-For four to five days after she went missing, there were various week radio signals that people were hearing, that were perhaps from Amelia Earhart.

S-Yeah.

J-So it was theorized at the time that maybe she had found a place to land and she was broadcasting SOS messages. So that's another reason that people like this theory.

D-Hm.

J-Yeah. So what if, remember that I said that there were, there were big cloud banks to the west of Howland Island? What if they emerged, through a navigation error, far south, far enough south of Howland Island that they were not able to see that column of smoke that the *Itasca* was emitting.

D and S-Uh huh.

J-And so they turned...

D-Or they were lower.

J-Yeah.

D-Than they thought they were.

S-One way or another they don't see the column of smoke.

J-Yeah. One way or another they don't see it, so, and they're under the impression that they're actually north of Howland Island, so they turn right, head down that line. Maybe, you know, they wind up

coming across this island, which is not the right island, but well, we're out of gas so it's time to land this thing.

S-Oh yeah, if you're running out of fuel...

D-It's somewhere to land.

J-Yeah.

S-...and there's, there's land, you land.

J-Yeah. And so other support for the theory is, in 1940 there was a British colonial officer named Gerald Gallagher who found a skeleton and what appeared to be a sextant box on the southeast corner of Gardner Island.

D-Huh.

J-You notice I'm not calling it, the actual name is Nikumaroro (Steve laughing). I'm calling it Gardner Island. They've renamed it, but I'm going to call it Gardner.

S-Yeah.

D-It's a Japanese island now?

J-Yeah, this one?

D-Yeah.

J-Uh, no. It's, I forget what country it's, it's part of another, like, archipelago country.

D-Ok, yeah.

J-But it's not Japanese. Gerald Gallagher sent the skeleton to Fiji, where British authorities looked at it and they concluded that it had belonged to a man about five foot, five inches tall.

S-Uh huh.

J-But then a 1998 reanalysis of the measurement data concluded that the skeleton actually belonged to a tall white woman of European ancestry.

S-Uh, I never understood how that worked.

J-How they managed to do that, you mean?

S-Yeah.

J-Yeah, that's a good question (laughing).

D-Cause the skeleton was gone.

J-Yeah, the original skeleton has long since disappeared.

D-So it was just from measurements?

J-Yeah. So I don't know. Did they go look at the records and somehow conclude that it's actually not a five foot five guy? But I don't know if there were photographs or what. But...

D-Well, I guess maybe if there were, like, specimens. Samples. Spamples.

J-Spamples.

D-That's what my brain was going to do.

J-Yeah. I don't think so. Yeah, I don't, uh, well this was done under the auspices of a group called...let me...it's The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, aka TIGHAR.

D-Oh (laughing).

J-Yeah.

S-Rowr.

J-Yeah, I know.

D-Ta-higer.

J-These guys started investigating Gardner Island as a possible resting place for Amelia and Fred in 1988.

D-Hm.

J-And I think they're still at it. I know they had an expedition, I think, as late as 2012. Out to the island.

S-Uh huh.

J-So they've been, uh...

S-It's not that big of an island.

J-No, it's not that huge, no. As far as I can tell, they have an unblemished record. In 28 years of historic aircraft recovery, they haven't found anything (all laughing). Yeah.

D-It's the perfect record.

J-Yeah.

D-It may be a...

S-They haven't been wrong yet.

J-Yeah.

D-...perfect zero.

J-Yeah.

D-But it's perfect.

J-Yeah. So anyway, that's what they believe, is that they landed on the reef...

D-That they...there, and they just died.

J-Yeah. And...

D-Of exposure.

J-And again, because of the radio messages, which were heard by a lot of people, nobody's sure if it was Amelia or just pranksters. It could have been a lot of pranksters.

S-So they think that, I, I read, was that because everybody knew that she was missing, and she was on that frequency, a lot of people were calling.

J-Uh huh.

S-And people, and I read this, that somebody said, “You know, there was so much traffic on there that it was kind of jammed up, and you got little wisps of prior, of transmissions that were just too low to make out, but you could kind of hear something.”

J-Uh huh.

S-And so that's, people were like, oh that's what's...this guy was saying that's what was happening, is that it's just too many people on the band...

J-Uh huh.

S-...and they're all talking, and it's just degrading the signal, so you're just picking up little bits here and there.

J-Yeah.

S-When normally there's, let's say, five people in the Pacific using it, there's now 500.

J-Uh huh. I know.

D-Uh huh.

S-That's a problem.

J-Yeah, it is a problem.

D-And they usually regulate things like that. I know there are a lot of military frequencies where you cannot, as a civilian, be on.

S-Oh yeah. You, no, no, you're in trouble.

D-So usually they'd regulate stuff like that, but I guess this one they weren't regulating.

J-Uh, yeah. And this, this might have been all over the frequency range too, I'm not sure.

D-Uh huh. Well and also it could have been under the auspice of, like, “Let's all listen to see if we can hear her.”

J-Uh huh.

D-Then they might have been a little more lenient at that point.

J-That is the thing to do, is just, for everybody to just shut up and stay off the radio and just listen, you know? (Laughing).

S and D-Yeah.

J-That would have been the thing to do.

S-It said, there was people calling, “Amelia, can you hear us? Amelia.” So then you hear the ghost of, you know, bits of a voice through the static, “Amelia,” and you think, you hear...you know, somebody says, “Amelia Earhart, are you there?” and it translates to “Amelia Earhart is there.”

D-Uh huh.

S-I mean, this happens.

J-Exactly. And it's the dumbest thing, because I mean obviously if Amelia and Fred have a working radio, they're going to be on it trying to get, you know, calling you.

S-Yeah.

J-You know? Don't you think?

D-Yeah.

J-Uh, yeah. Anyway, there was one notable instance which was a girl named Betty Clank, who was living in Florida at the time.

S-This is a hell of a skip if she got a radio skip.

J-Yeah, but you know, it's not unheard of, but it is a hell of a skip, you're right.

S-Yeah.

J-Half way around the world? Yeah.

S-Uh huh.

J-But she was fiddling with her dad's shortwave radio and she heard a woman's voice saying, “This is Amelia Earhart, help me.” So she listened to this transmission for three hours or so and took notes. And years later she gave those notes to Ric Gillespie, who is the head of TIGHAR.

D-Ti-gaher.

J-Yeah. Ti-gar. Ti-gar or whatever you call them.

D-Uh huh.

J-And I've seen copies of the notes. They're not, they're not too readable, but you can make sense...somebody's transcribed them, so they're making them much easier to read.

D-Uh huh.

J-It's mostly a woman's voice, but there was a man's voice in the background, and apparently he sounded kind of agitated and, uh, and at one point he says he's got to leave because, quote, “The water's knee-deep. Let me out.” Unquote. And this woman kept making reference to “New York City.” And in fact she said it a total of seven times, which is key because just a stone's throw away on that reef was the wreck of the *SS Norwich City.*

D-Hm.

S-Huh.

J-Yeah. Which foundered on that reef in 1929. So was Amelia saying “Norwich City” but Betty Clank was hearing “New York City?”

D-”New York City?”

J-Or just...

S-Or not understanding what “Norwich” was and presuming?

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah.

S-Yeah.

J-Yeah, yeah. That's the closest thing that she knows about so, cause that would be a way to clue the Navy into your position.

S-Uh huh. True.

J-Yeah. There are some numbers in Betty's notes, but none of them bear any resemblance to Gardner Island's actual coordinates. And since Fred was apparently still alive, it's been assumed by everybody that he was incapacitated due to injury or something, or maybe his sextant got broken in the landing. So they didn't know their location, but they luckily had a shipwreck right there called the *Norwich City*.

S-Very convenient.

J-It's very handy. A great way to clue people in as to where you are. But unluckily it doesn't appear that anybody heard that transmission other than Betty, so...

S-Which is suspicious.

J-Well, it makes me wonder, yeah.

D-Uh huh.

J-Ric Gillespie of TIGHAR theorizes that Amelia and Fred and the plane were on the reef for four or five days before the plane got finally swept off the reef and out to sea. And they suspect that it's still there, not far off shore. And of course they haven't found it yet, though. They did find, I think this was in 2012, they did find, using sonar, a large airplane-sized object on the sea floor not too far away from the island. But...

S-There's a lot of those, though.

J-Yeah, there really are.

S-They're called rocks.

J-Yeah (laughing).

D-Like, a lot of those, yeah.

J-Yeah, yeah.

S-I mean, not, I'm being, I'm joking...

J-Yeah (laughing).

S-...being dismissive of the theory, but there's a lot of airplane-sized things on the bottom of the ocean.

J-Oh sure.

D-Frankly whales are air, airplane-sized things.

J-That's a good point. And...

S-Or bigger.

D-Yeah.

J-You know, in the course of World War II, we left a lot of airplane wreckage on, on the Pacific sea floor.

D-Uh huh.

S-Yeah.

D-We did.

J-Yeah, there's lots of it down there. Yeah, I don't know why they weren't able to confirm this, that this was actually the plane or not. Maybe they just wanted an excuse to come back at a later date.

S-Maybe.

J-Yeah.

S-Google Ocean hadn't been finished at that point, so...

J-Yeah. Well anyway, they did scour the island. They found some interesting stuff. The big find is a rectangular piece of aluminum with a lot of rivet holes in it.

D-Hm.

J-Yeah. You've seen pictures of that, I'm sure.

S-I have.

J-Yeah.

S-And I really question it.

D-That couldn't have come from anything else!

J-Yeah, I know (laughing).

D-You don't see that on beaches anywhere!

J-Yeah. Well, they did have, they did cover, they did have one of the windows on the, on the Electra plated over with aluminum. And this is about the size and dimensions of that piece of aluminum.

S-So here's my question, though. Is I understand why the body of the aircraft has a bajillion rivets in it, because it's riving that skin to a frame.

J-Yeah.

S-But why would the window cover have a bajillion rivets...

J-In the middle.

S-...that were in the same line as the body when there's no frame to be riveting it to?

J-Well yeah, exactly. I don't, you know, I don't know what actually you would be building that would need that many rivets. It was, they riveted the hell out of it.

S-Oh, yeah. It's riddled with them.

J-Yeah. Well, we'll talk about that, that piece a little bit later here.

S-Ok.

J-But yeah, that is definitely a reasonable question. But Ric Gillespie of TIGHAR is, says he's 99 percent that, that it's the real deal. Let's see, what else did they find?

D-Has there, can you do testing on the metal?

J-I'm sure you could probably find out.

D-You know? Like if they took it to, I'm sorry , who made the Electra?

J-Lockheed.

D-Lockheed. If, like, he took it to Lockheed and said, “Hey, can you test this metal to see if it's...”

S-”If it's what you used at that time?”

D-”...even remotely similar to what you used at that time?”

J-Uh huh.

D-Seems like they could do that, right?

J-Probably.

D-Ok. But he hasn't done that cause...?

J-I, I don't know if he's done that or not. He claims...

D-He likes his perfect...

J-Yeah, he claims he's gotten it, more or less, authenticated, but I don't know what that process was.

D-”More or less” (laughing).

S-He hasn't released any of the authentication information.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah. Well, we are more or less detectives, so.

J-Yeah. Exactly.

S-We are.

D-Yeah.

J-The, well you know, the...

S-I've more or less got my detective's license.

D-Yeah.

J-Well, you know, that's, well like the whole skeleton thing, you know? Suddenly this guy, this guy gets involved with it, and suddenly decided it had to be a tall white woman.

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah.

S-Five foot five.

J-Yeah, I know. Let's see what else they found. They found an impressive haul of stuff. They found a cap from a jar.

D-Ok.

J-A zipper pull. The heel off a woman's shoe.

D-Ok.

J-A piece of plexiglass that was curved and it could possible have been from an airplane window.

D-Uh huh.

J-A few improvised tools and a piece of bone that appears to be part of a human finger, although DNA analysis has been inconclusive on that one.

S-Yeah.

D-Do you think Amelia Earhart wore heels when she was flying?

J-Well I'm not sure if these...

S-Well of course!

J-...were high heels or low heels. I don't know.

D-Heels of any kind.

J-Yeah, I don't know.

S-Well boots. I mean, you wear boots in general. I mean, just regular day-to-day boots have a heel on them.

J-Yeah. These weren't high heels.

S-No. I, I think they're like, look at Joe's shoe. There's a heel on the rear of it.

D-But it's part of the overall sole. It's a, so I have the impression that it's a...I'm sorry, I'm kind of a nerd about things like this.

S-I know you are.

D-Um, that it's a disconnected sole. That it's not, you know, that the heel is different from the sole of the shoe.

S-Uh huh.

D-Which usually means that it's a bigger heel.

S-I disagree with that.

D-A little bit. No, if it's going to be a flat sole, if you're wearing a flat shoe of any kind, the sole is one piece.

S-One continuous piece, yes.

D-Right. Even an inch you usually have the same continuous piece. Yes. Don't look at me like that. I know my stuff (laughing).

S-I'm, no, I'm listening. I'm listening.

D-And then two inches usually is when you start to get the two disconnected pieces.

S-Today.

J-I think that...

D-No, even then.

S-Ok.

J-I think that, I don't know, I mean, cause yeah, I've owned pairs of dress shoes, for example.

D-Uh huh.

J-Where it was, like, a long, sort of almost wooden-y, wooden-y thing with a rubber sole...

D-Uh huh.

J-...attached to it.

S-Nailed in.

J-And we're talking, we're talking, like, you know, half to a three quarters of an inch heel.

S-Yeah.

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah. And so, you know, I'm very sure it could have become disconnected somehow.

D-So if we're talk...yeah. Although I guess I wouldn't call that a heel off of a, a person's shoe.

S-I...

J-They, they don't know even for sure if it's a man's or a woman's.

S-I don't know that there's much to be gained by this because we, Joe just hit on the perfect point. We don't know if it's a man or woman's heel.

D-Uh huh.

S-And it could have washed up there along with a thousand rubber duckies.

D-Sure.

J-Well, exactly.

D-Yeah. So we're talking it's the rubber piece...have we seen pictures of it?

J-Of the heel?

D-Yeah.

J-I have not.

S-Uh uh.

D-Ok, that's fine.

J-You could probably go out to TIGHAR's website and see a picture of it (Steve laughing).

D-No, that's fine.

J-But here's the deal. Here's the deal, is that island is, people have been, people have actually lived on that island...

S-Uh huh.

J-...off and on for years. And people have been visiting the island, at the time, for, you know, for well over a hundred years. People have been coming and going from that island.

S-As have critters, which is why the finger bone could easily be from a turtle.

J-Yeah, that's what they are saying, is that the, as far as the DNA analysis goes...

S-Cause they can't tell.

J-They can't tell if it's a human or a sea turtle.

S-Yeah.

J-They really can't. But yeah, it would be, it would be really surprising, if you scoured the island, to not find some junk laying around.

S-Uh huh.

D-Yeah.

J-Don't you think? (Laughing).

S-People are messy. We throw stuff in the ocean all the time.

J-In fact, I, I am impressed that they found so little.

S-Yeah.

J-I really am. It means they're either spectacularly incompetent or people have been a lot tidier than we give them credit for.

D-Uh huh.

J-I don't know. But here's my other problems with their theory overall, which is the aluminum panel?

S-Uh huh.

J-Their theory stipulates that the plane landed on the reef intact, and they were using the radio. So how did that aluminum piece get detached from the airplane?

S-That's a good question.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah.

J-All right, next up, Betty Clank's notes. Remember the notes from...

S-Uh huh.

J-"Norwich City" to "New York City." And I looked in there and there are lots of references to New York City, but nowhere near that is the word "wreck" or "shipwreck."

D-Uh...

J-Because, you know, think about it. Now imagine...

S-But I could, I could see you saying, you know, we are near the *Norwich City*, expecting everybody to understand that the *Norwich* is a wreck.

J-Yeah.

D-Here's a question. When was it that Betty was listening? Betty, right? Betty.

J-Yeah. Supposedly it was, like, the afternoon of July 5th.

D-So it was right when they would have...ok. Never mind.

J-Yeah.

D-I was going to make the argument that, ok, so they're, like, dehydrated and malnourished and have just gone through this incredible trauma.

J-Uh huh.

D-That, you know, you're just kind of saying things that you can see. Not necessarily thinking, "Oh, I should tell them it's a shipwreck."

J-Yeah.

D-But if it was that night, no, no.

J-Yeah. No, it was, and...well, the thing about it is is let's imagine that you're shipwrecked, and there's a ship right there. It's called the *Bob Jones*.

D-Uh huh.

J-The *SS Bob Jones*. And you want to be found, so if you have half an ounce of brains, you're not going to be saying "Bob Jones, Bob Jones." You're not going to say that. You're going to say, "The wreck of the *Bob Jones*. The shipwreck of the *Bob Jones* is here."

S-Or if anything else, the *USS Bob Jones*.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah.

D-And this does assume that she was, you know, she was hearing Amelia Earhart or the, she was transcribing, whatever.

S-Yeah.

D-From that first night. Because if you take a couple days of dehydration and malnourishment and stuff like that...

J-Uh huh.

D-...it's much easier to see that you're just literally, like, “Rock, uh, ship, ocean, tree,” You know.

J-Well, true, but...

D-But, I'm...

J-...the island had, it was surveyed later that year by an, I was going to talk about that. It had well over a hundred big, healthy coconut trees.

D-Ok.

J-Yeah.

D-So no.

S-Sustenance.

J-They could...

D-Easily, yeah.

J-Yeah, lots of, you know, lots of that stuff.

D-Uh huh.

J-All right, so here's my next problem with their theory, which is, ok, the plane was washed off the reef by wave action, but wouldn't it be more likely that breakers would have been coming in from outside the island and pushed the plane off into the lagoon?

D-I would say not even more likely (Joe laughing). Like physically, yes.

J-It seems more likely.

S-I actually want to play devil's advocate because you're presuming that it is landed in the middle of and sitting on top of the reef...

J-Yeah.

S-...instead of just, just barely resting on the exterior edge of the reef, which, when it breaks free and

it's sinking, would slide back down. Just the wave action would break whatever was holding it...

J-Sure.

S-...and then it would sink.

D-It does seem like then it would just be sitting, like, right next to the reef then.

S-I am in, I am in agreement with you on that point, but I'm saying, it, I, I think that yes, it should have gone inwards, but it could easily have gone outwards.

J-Yeah.

S-And then flown through the ocean for several miles.

J-It is true, cause that thing, with that big ass empty tank...

S-A lot of air.

D-Uh huh.

J-It would have, it would have, I don't know that it would have been positively buoyant, but it definitely wouldn't have been too terribly negatively buoyant...

S-Uh huh.

J-...so it could have easily floated a long ways away.

S-Yeah.

J-Yeah. Especially with those big old wings, you know?

S-Uh huh.

J-It could just drift on for miles probably.

S-Yeah.

J-Here's my next problem with it, though, is that it, it really does appear from the radio transmissions they were getting, they were getting stronger and stronger. I mean, it appears that Amelia and Fred were very close to Howland Island before they made that turn and headed south.

S-Uh huh.

J-And it just seems they just did not have enough gas to get all the way to Gardner Island. What do you guys think?

D-I agree.

J-Yeah.

D-I think.

S-Yeah. I mean, there's, it's, even at perfect mileage, I think it's a stretch to say they got there.

J-Yeah.

D-And they definitely weren't getting perfect mileage.

J-No, they weren't. They weren't. They, you know, with the headwinds and everything else. And here's my last problem with it, is that Navy planes searched the island. I mean, they searched all the islands in the vicinity.

S-Uh huh.

D-They would have seen it.

J-Yeah. They flew around it on July 9th, and they circled it and they flew over it and everything. They looked at it pretty carefully, and they saw nothing. And of course, as you say, they could have died of thirst, except that's only if they're really, really stupid or they found no way to crack open coconuts, you know (Steve laughing).

D-Which would mean there's no rocks.

J-Yeah, yeah.

S-They could have used the heel of their shoe, which we did find.

D-That's true.

S-It is a wide sole, not a high heel.

D-It's the rubber off of the bottom of one of those, yeah.

J-Yeah. You know, I'm sure they must have had something on the plane.

S-Uh huh.

J-Yeah.

D-Or a rock (Steve laughing).

J-Or a rock, yeah. Or a rock. I know.

D-Literally a rock will do it.

J-Yeah.

S-I saw “Castaway.” It works.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah, I know.

D-That's a historic documentary, right?

S-Yeah.

J-Yeah. So anyway, besides those guys, in October 1937 a British Colonial Service survey team went to the island and spend three days surveying it.

S-Yeah.

J-Those are the guys, I think they counted 111 big coconut trees with lots of coconuts on them. They said that there was just, you know, scads and scads of fish in the lagoon, and big coconut crabs, which would be real good eats, and probably not that hard to catch. So there was plenty of stuff to keep them alive there. And last of all, there would have been a lot of stuff. If their plane was actually on the reef, wouldn't they, wouldn't you have off-loaded everything that you could, off of that plane onto the island?

S-That's presuming that you're able to get back to the plane easily.

J-Well, apparently they were, because they kept going to the plane to make radio calls.

D-To make radio contact, yeah.

J-Yeah.

S-Well, maybe they stayed in the plane.

J-It could, it could be that they stayed in the plane too.

S-They may have said, “That is a long way, and I can't make that swim. And oh God, sharks!” Because we're all afraid of sharks.

J-Yeah.

D-Or, I, sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

S-Oh no, and so they just say screw it, we're going to stay here where we can use our radio, which is weird because the radio probably would have been dead in the water, but ok, ok, whatever.

J-Yeah. Well, no, this, the reef was actually, somebody did an analysis of that whole thing, of the tides and everything, and the reef was actually high and dry.

S-Oh, was it?

J-Most of the time. I mean, it's not always completely high and dry, but I think the water rose up over the top of it, but not a huge, not a huge amount.

S-Ok.

D-So...

J-Although tides vary from day to day, of course, obviously.

S-I was under the presumption that it would have been partially submerged at all times.

J-No.

S-That was my presumption.

J-No.

D-I would, I guess, piggyback on the argument that Steve was making earlier, that the plane could have been on the outer edge of the reef, kind of, like, you know, almost like a car over a cliff, right?

S-Uh huh.

D-And so you kind of have to say, well yeah, there's usable stuff in there, but if I go back in there and get sucked down with it, I'm done. So let's just stay where we're at with the things we have.

J-Yeah, yeah, but see...

D-But you would assume that they had something.

J-But they, again, yeah.

S-You would have taken something with you. If the plane plops down and isn't moving...

J-Yeah.

D-You grab whatever you can.

S-You get your go bag of stuff and you go.

D-Yeah.

J-Well, and they had, as far as I know, unless they were really, really stupid and they threw it away, they had a life raft in there.

D-Although, let's be fair, they threw away their antenna, so they might have thrown their...(laughing).

J-Yeah, I know, I know (Steve laughing).

D-They were off-loading stuff to reduce weight before, right?

J-Yeah, yeah.

D-Before they left on this last leg, so.

S-Who needs a life raft?

J-Yeah, and so...

D-I mean, really.

J-...nobody really knows. I mean, I suppose you could say with, you know, perfect common sense, say, “Hey, if we go down, we're just going, we're just going to break up and die anyway, so who needs a life raft?”

S-True.

J-So maybe that's what they were thinking. I don't know.

D-Yeah. Those life rafts are really heavy.

J-Uh huh. Yeah, that's true. Ok, so anyway, it still amazes me that so many people take this theory seriously.

D-Uh huh.

S-Yeah. I have a lot of problems with it.

D-I think it's the hope.

J-I guess.

D-You know? Cause we, I mean, that's the thing...

S-Springs eternal.

D-Well, and we encounter this in a lot of stories, right? The logical answer is this person disappeared. These people are dead. This happened, and I know that sounds really jaded, but that is the logical answer. But as humans, we want to assume that these other human beings survived.

J-I know, but, and don't forget also that there's some people who make money off this stuff.

D-Oh absolutely (Joe laughing).

J-Yeah. So, Ric Gillespie and TIGHAR made a good living off this stuff.

D-Yeah, absolutely.

S-Oh yeah.

J-So yeah.

D-Yeah.

J-So, maybe, maybe I should start doing something like this, I don't know.

D-Like a podcast about stuff like this, or whatever.

J-Yeah, there you go.

D-Yeah.

S-Crazy.

J-Yeah. Well, let's get on to our last theory...

D-Yeah, speaking of, we're going to break up in the air anyway. Right?

J-Yeah, yeah, I know. So this is, uh, there are people who really believe this, and it seems kind of obvious actually. So they faced headwinds throughout the trip. I had heard 26.5 miles an hour, but let's assume it was intermittent.

D-Hm.

J-So I concluded an average headwind of 20 miles an hour.

S-Ok.

J-Just for fun. Optimum airspeed for the Electra was 145 miles an hour for the best fuel economy, which of course, you're going to want the best bang for your buck, fuel wise, if you're Amelia and Fred.

D-Uh huh.

S-Right.

J-And it was told that Amelia intended to fly at 142 to 145 mph. That would give the Electra a ground speed of, we're assuming again, 20 miles an hour average headwinds. That would be a ground speed of 125 miles an hour.

S-Uh huh.

J-So they reported at 20:14, 20 hours and 14 minutes into their trip, that they had turned to 157 337 bearing.

S-Right.

J-So if their ground speed was 125 miles an hour, they would have been 2,529 miles into the trip, and 27 miles short of Gardner Island.

S-Uh huh.

J-Yeah. So remember what the commander of the *Itasca* said about the smoke column?

D-He didn't think it'd be more than 20 miles, right?

J-Yeah. From the north and west he didn't think it would be visible more than 20 miles and so it's a huge shame, but I, you know, if they'd just gone a few more miles before they made that turn, you know, things might have...

S-They might have seen it.

J-It might have turned out a lot differently. If they were, be able to see the sun, and it had just come up and so it might have been shining in their eyes, if they could see it. It doesn't sound like they could, because if they'd been able to see the sun, you would think they'd be able to see that column of smoke.

D-Hm.

J-Yeah, maybe. Or maybe not. You know, maybe they popped out into the sun and the column of smoke was directly between them and the sun, and they were kind of blinded and they just couldn't see it.

D-Yeah.

S-So I can't remember, was it, was it a coal fired unit or was it steam fired? This ship. Cause I'm trying...

J-Oil fired.

S-Is it actually black smoke that it was belching, or was it...

D-It was oil, wasn't it?

S...just a column of steam, or oil, or what was it?

J-Yeah, no. It was some kind of sooty thing. I'm not sure. They were...

S-Ok, so it would have been a black, it wouldn't have been a steam cloud.

D-Yeah.

J-Oh no.

S-Ok. I just suddenly couldn't grab that bit of information.

J-Yeah, I believe it was coal fired. I probably should have checked on that. Sorry.

D-But I guess also, coming out of a bunch of clouds, you might think, “Well, there's another frickin' cloud.”

J-Yeah.

D-”Ugh, ok, where are we?”

J-Well, according to what the commander said, he seemed to think it was pretty distinctively darker than the surrounding clouds.

D-Yeah, well

J-Yeah. He said it would have, there's no way they could have not seen it.

D-Ok.

J-Yeah.

D-Unless they were more than 20 miles away.

J-Unless they were more than 20 miles away to the west, yeah.

S-Yeah.

J-But I think that they might have chosen a poor time to arrive at Howland. They probably should have left Lae a little later.

D-Uh huh.

J-Like one or two in the afternoon, and then that way they would get there, and it'd be mid-morning.

D-Hm.

J-And the light...

S-Rather than...

J-And the light would be better.

S-Yeah. Bad morn...yeah. Low light.

J-Yeah. But as far as 216 [I believe this is what he said, but I couldn't hear clearly.], how Fred Noonan could have made that navigational error is up to, there's been conjecture about that. The one is that just because of the weather conditions it was impossible for him to get accurate fixes on stars and the sun. And so he was just going by dead reckoning, and he figured at 20 hours of flight, they had to have reached the longitude of Howland. And maybe they underestimated the total strength of the headwinds against them.

D-Hm.

J-And there's another theory that I read about, which is that he might have been able to take a fix on the sun as it came up, and you can do that to fix, if you know the time, you can use that to fix your latitude.

S-Uh huh.

J-But you have to make, there's a certain way of calculating it if you're on land, but if you're a thousand feet in the air, you have to make an adjustment to that, otherwise...

S-And do you have to know what the time is locally?

J-Yeah. That could have been it too.

S-So, based on all, I mean, we've been doing everything in Greenwich Mean, but if the time zones are so weird, he could have easily been an hour ahead or behind of what he was.

D-Or a half an hour.

S-Or half an hour, and that would have changed his, his bearing.

D-And they'd been up for, what, 20 hours through a storm...

J-Twenty hours. Yeah. No, it was, I'm sure...

D-On leg...

J-You know, when you do this stuff, I don't know much about navigation, but I'm sure you've got to use Greenwich Mean Time. You can't be futzing around with time zones.

S-I don't know. Yeah. But.

J-Yeah.

D-But, but ok, even if it's not...

S-Either way, you could have been tired and worn out.

J-Yeah, exactly.

D-Oh yeah, I mean, they'd been flying for how many days, for how many average hours a day, you know? And they're coming off a 20 hour leg at the end of their trip, through a storm.

J-Yeah.

D-You see the sun and you go, “Yeah, just turn that way.”

S and J-Yeah.

D-And it's the wrong way. Whoops.

J-Yeah. And so it might have been a really easy navigation error.

S-Uh huh.

J-Something like he didn't make that adjustment and if he had just...

S-And they ran out of fuel and they dumped it into open ocean.

J-Yeah. This is the whole thing is why it's, if their radio receiver had been working, this would have turned out a lot differently.

S-Oh yeah.

D-Yeah.

J-Because they could have gotten a weather report from the *Itasca*, and they would have known basically it's sunny to the south and east, cloud banks north and west. So they know that they're either in a cloud bank to the west of Howland, or in a cloud bank to the north of Howland.

S-Yeah.

J-And all they have to do is turn southeast and keep going till you reach the sun.

S-Uh huh.

D-Turn right.

J-Yeah, that's it.

D-Yeah.

J-Turn right, yeah. And, yeah.

D-That's a bummer.

J-It's a damn shame. I mean, just that one little thing, you know. Lacking that radio receiver.

D-Uh huh.

J-It totally hosed those people.

S-And again, I think it's, we started joking about this in the beginning, but I think she was using new tech, and there was some problems with that, and it wasn't tested and something went wrong with it.

J-Yeah.

D-I think she was...

S-And we'll never know what the problem was.

D-Yeah, yeah.

J-Well, we might find out. We might find the plane one of these days.

D-Maybe.

S-But I have a feeling that by the time we find the plane, the, everything is going to be so corroded, interior wise, that we're not going to be, “Oh look, that one glass fuse blew.” Nah, all that stuff's going to be no good.

J-Uh huh.

D-Yeah, but if we find the plane on land, then we'll know that they lived.

S-Well, that's true.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah. And you know, if we find it we'll probably find some mysterious evidence that he's choked her to death on their way down (all laughing).

S-”Why did you do this?!”

D-Yeah, pretty much.

J-”I hate you!” (Laughing). Well all right, so much for our...you guys have any more thoughts? Any more theories?

S-No.

D-I think, yeah. I think it's an unfortunate accident.

J-Yeah, very.

S-I agree.

J-Very unfortunate. So yeah.

D-So don't try to fly around the world with first gen tech, guys.

S-Yeah.

J-Well, and also don't throw away your trailing antenna.

D-Yeah.

J-Because if they'd had that functioning radio, things would have turned out differently.

D-Way differently.

S-Yeah.

J-That was big mistake.

S-It may have been a hassle, but it was worth it.

J-Yeah. All right. Well, so much for that mystery. Another one down. You probably know if we have a website or not. Well, yes we do. It's called thinking sideways podcast dot com, where you can download episodes, you can leave comments, you can check our links. We always put a few links up for all of our mysteries. If you find us on iTunes, where of course we are, you can subscribe and leave us a review, hopefully a nice review. And of course you can stream us on any one of a billion websites. We're on Facebook, so find us out there. You can like us and follow us. You can also join the group, because we have a Facebook group.

S-Uh huh.

J-Twitter, that is thinkin sideways, without the 'g'. And of course we have an email account. We really do.

S-Yeah.

D-We do.

J-Thinking sideways podcast at gmail. If you've got theories about Amelia or if you are Amelia and Fred, send us an email.

D-And you've figured out how to use email.

J-Yeah. What else? We've got a subreddit. I'm not sure how active that is right now, but it's there.

D-It's fine.

J-Ok.

D-Just keep joining and talking and we'll get there.

J-Join and talk, yeah. And last of all if you want to support the show, we are on patreon dot com. That's a kind of thing where it's kind of like you pledge a certain amount per episode.

D-It's like Run for the Arts.

J-Yeah, exactly.

S-It's whatever you're comfortable with per. We've also got the Paypal, and we've been putting up new merch. We got a bunch of new merch.

J-Oh yeah, oh yeah. Paypal on our website. Yeah. So anyway, not necessary, but if you feel like it.

S-Lots of cool shirts.

D-Uh huh, and stickers.

J-Yeah.

S-(whispering) Stickers.

J-Yeah, we've been selling a lot of those.

D-Uh huh.

S-(whispering) Yeah.

J-I don't know. Half a dozen anyway. So I guess it's patreon dot com slash thinking sideways if you want to find us.

D-And the other links are on our website.

S-It's all on our website, yep.

J-All right. Well that's it for this week.

D-Yeah.

J-You guys have any final thoughts?

D-No.

S-I'm good.

D-Not going to fly my plane anywhere soon.

J-Yeah, not over the ocean, that's for sure.

D-No.

S-Let's take off.

J-All right, bye guys.