

# Amelia Earhart



*Beyond the Grave*



**W.C. JAMESON**

Foreword by **GREGORY A. FEITH**

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# Foreword

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To this day, the mysterious disappearance of Amelia M. Earhart during her around-the-world flight in 1937 evokes debate whether her flight was a tragic accident or the result of a covert mission disguised as a goodwill publicity flight that ended unexpectedly without a contingency plan. W.C. Jameson has captured the essence of the latter perspective through the abundance of credible evidence that strongly suggests Amelia Earhart survived a presumed emergency or crash landing in the South Pacific and was taken prisoner. The controversy that arises from this evidence is the fact that, although presumed dead, Amelia was actually repatriated to the United States under a different identity and lived a solitary life while maintaining one of the greatest secrets in aviation history.

In aircraft accident investigation, the investigator must rely on the facts, conditions, and circumstances that are developed from various sources, including the aircraft wreckage, witness information, documents, testimonials, and other credible information to determine the causes and contributing factors of the accident. *Amelia Earhart: Beyond the Grave* is a compelling discussion of fact-based evidence that presents the reader with a logical explanation for why there has never been any wreckage found from Amelia's "specially equipped" Lockheed L-10E Electra or why the U.S. government still classifies numerous documents related to the publicity flight as "top secret."

As an aircraft accident investigator, I have found it easy to dismiss opinions, "pet theories," and good story lines that are not supported by credible evidence. However, W.C. Jameson's presentation of factual information, corroborating evidence from others investigating this flight, and the comparisons and parallels he draws from other historical people and events captured my attention throughout the book. This is a must-read book for those who want to learn about the more intriguing aspects of aviation's greatest mystery flight!

Gregory A. Fei  
Former "Go-Team" Captain and Senior Air Safety Investigator  
U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

# Woman of Mystery, Woman of Contradictions

The Amelia Earhart of popular perception—“The First Lady of the Sky” and “America’s Darling”—was quite unlike the private Amelia Earhart. The public Earhart was, in fact, a product of marketing and media, all brilliantly designed, constructed, and masterfully steered by her husband, the publishing and publicity magnate George Palmer Putnam.

The truth is, at the time, Earhart was only one of a number of female aviatrices who gained notice during the early 1900s. Though she was often billed as one of the world’s greatest pilots, this was far from true. Earhart possessed a set of skills and accomplishments related to flying and was fearless, to be sure, but not necessarily any more so than a number of other female pilots of the time. She was no better or worse than the rest, but as a result of fearlessness and a desire to break down certain social barriers along with a clever publicity and marketing campaign, she managed better breaks than her contemporaries. She was, without doubt, the most famous.

The private Amelia Earhart was an altogether different person. She was a woman who had a passion for flying, who accomplished a number of impressive deeds, and who turned out to be very lucky.

Earhart was a woman around whom an international mystery eventually swirled, one that had its genesis in 1937 with her reported disappearance, one that continues to intrigue us to this day. It is a grand mystery that is accompanied by a number of correlative mysteries, all of which have generated considerable controversy over what actually happened to the aviatrix, as well as who was involved. The mysteries extended to manipulations orchestrated by the U.S. government and the extent to which international relationships and politics were inserted.

What may be an even greater mystery surrounds the notion that Earhart, following her disappearance, had been held captive by the Japanese for eight years, rescued at the end of the war, and, with governmental assistance, repatriated to the United States, where she lived out her life under an alias in what amounted to an early-day witness protection program.

More than three-quarters of a century following Earhart’s “disappearance” during her much ballyhooed around-the-world flight, the questions related to what actually happened to her are still being asked, and the answers continue to be debated. Today, there is an overabundance of Amelia Earhart research and inquiry forums on the Internet that remains active and ongoing.

Any tempting research project demands an extensive literature search prior to undertaking a sophisticated investigation. In the case of Amelia Earhart, it was discovered that there exists an active cadre of Earhart aficionados, a large percentage of them aburst with enthusiasm, energy, and commitment but for the most part unskilled at both research and writing. Furthermore, there appears to be little agreement among them relative to what ultimately became of Earhart and her copilot Fred Noonan once they lost radio contact during her famous around-the-world flight. After reading and studying dozens of books and hundreds of articles and Internet sites, as well as interviewing a number



of people intimate with flying and with Earhart, it is apparent that there exists a plethora of theories relative to what might have happened to her.

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Because of the strong differences of opinion and obvious passion for the subject that can be found among many of the enthusiasts, a degree of hostility exists among some members of the cadre, with occasional sniping at one another throughout the pages of the published books and the Internet postings. It leaves the appearance of aggressive competition, insecure egos, and not much cooperation.

Research has been further hampered by the fact that far too many of the available books about Earhart are self-published and vanity press offerings, all of them suffering from the usual and expected lack of competent editing, design, fact checking, and other furbelows one expects with a serious and professional publication about an important topic. A number of these publications have incompletely prepared indexes or none at all, further frustrating interested readers and researchers.

In the end, it became clear that a great deal of work still needed to be undertaken relative to Amelia Earhart—who she was, what she did, her final mission, and what might have become of her.

In the following pages is presented an array of facts and theories relative to the so-called disappearance of Amelia Earhart, evidence related to what befell her, what might have become of her in the years immediately following what the U.S. government claimed was her crash into the ocean and subsequent sinking, and her eventual repatriation to her homeland, where she may have lived for another several decades under an assumed name.

Layered over the mystery of Amelia Earhart's disappearance are a number of others that involve prominent political and military figures who weave in and out of the events that began months prior to Earhart's famous around-the-world flight, mysteries that suggest military conspiracy, political manipulations, cover-up, and outright lying to the American public.

The fact is, the official government position on the fate of Amelia Earhart is a lie. It is hoped that the details relative to a quest for the truth that are presented in this book will contribute to a greater understanding of what happened to America's first lady of the air.

# Origins

Throughout much of Amelia Earhart's life she pursued a number of career choices, seldom remaining long in any of them. The one thing upon which she maintained a deep and vibrant focus, however, was flying. Flying would eventually define her, it would bring her unheard-of fame, and in time it would lead to her famous disappearance, one of the greatest mysteries in the history of the United States.

On July 24, 1897, Amelia Mary Earhart was born to Amy and Edwin Earhart. The birth took place at the home of Amy's parents in Atchison, Kansas, fifty miles northwest of Kansas City. She was nicknamed "Millie." When Earhart was born, there were only forty-five states, and the principal personal mode of transportation was horse and buggy. Two and one-half years later a sister, Muriel, was born.

The marriage of Amy and Edwin was stormy. Though Edwin held down a job as a claims attorney for a railroad company, his income was somewhat meager. Amy, on the other hand, was used to a higher standard of living. Her father was Judge Alfred Otis, and the Otis family lived in relative luxury. The problem of not having enough money generated strife sufficient to ship Amelia and Muriel to the Otis home, where they were, for the most part, raised and educated. The sisters were enrolled in a private school in Kansas City.

From time to time, Amelia and Muriel would return to the home of their parents, but peace and harmony were in short supply. In addition to the problems associated with having too little money, Edwin had taken to drinking. Instability reigned, further abetted by the fact that Edwin was transferred often as a result of his job. In time he was fired, and the family income fell to nothing. In 1915, Amy and Edwin separated. Edwin's alcoholism was to have a profound effect on Amelia, one that surfaced often during subsequent years.

Amelia eventually graduated from Chicago's Hyde Park High School in June 1916, the sixth school she attended in four years. By this time, she was known for her competence seasoned with a streak of independence.

Around the time Amelia graduated from high school, mother Amy received an inheritance that provided for a good living, and in time, she and Edwin were reunited and the family was living in Kansas City. In the fall of 1916, Amelia enrolled at Ogontz College in Rydal, Pennsylvania. Ogontz began in 1850 as the Chestnut Street Female Academy in Philadelphia. In 1883 it moved to the Elkin Park estate of financier Jay Cooke and was renamed Ogontz after a Sandusky Indian chief. In 1916, the institution moved to Rydal in the suburban Abington Township. Today, Ogontz is part of the Pennsylvania State University System.

It was while at Ogontz that Amelia began taking notice of women who excelled in positions normally dominated by males, women who were becoming doctors, lawyers, and bank presidents and running for political office.

During the Christmas holiday of 1917, Amelia traveled to Toronto, Canada, to visit sister Muriel who was living there. It was in Toronto that Amelia first observed soldiers who had returned from World War I, many of whom were wounded and maimed. This impressed her deeply, and with a keen sense of commitment she undertook a Red Cross-sponsored course that would yield a qualification as a nurse's aide. When Amelia completed the requirements, she began serving at Toronto's Spadina Military Hospital.

For the most part, Amelia was involved in the menial yet important tasks of emptying bedpans, making beds, working in the kitchen, serving food, and washing patients. Caring for the war-wounded had a deep impact on the young woman, and she never forgot the experience.

While she was serving at the hospital, Amelia met a man who was an officer in the Royal Flying Corps. One day, he invited her to accompany him to an airfield outside of Toronto to watch planes taking off and landing. In her book *20 Hrs. 40 Min.: Our Flight in the Friendship*, Amelia wrote that was this experience that generated her "first urge to fly."

The war had finally wound down, and Amelia returned to the United States in 1919. While her head was filled with thoughts of airplanes and flying, she enrolled in a premedical program at Columbia University in New York City. After completing one year at the university, Amelia decided to join her parents, who by this time were living in Los Angeles, California. She arrived during the summer of 1920. While in Los Angeles, Amelia and father Edwin attended an air show at Long Beach's Daugherty Field. Here, she confessed to him that she had always wanted to fly. In response, Edwin made arrangements for his daughter to be taken up in an airplane.

The following day after Edwin paid the ten-dollar fee, Amelia experienced flight for the first time. Before the plane landed, she made a commitment to herself that she was going to learn to pilot an aircraft. She began making plans to take lessons, and she was determined to receive them from a female pilot she had read about.

The pilot was Nita Snook, and she had an immediate and deep effect on Earhart. Snook agreed to take the young woman on as a student. To pay for her lessons, Amelia offered Snook some of the Liberty Bonds she possessed. Snook agreed they were sufficient to get far enough along in the lessons to make a determination whether or not her new student had any competencies as a flyer. Earhart took her first lesson on the morning of January 3, 1921, in a Kinner airplane, built by the Kinner Airplane and Motor Corporation.

Most of Earhart's time was now spent at the airfield absorbing the lessons provided by Snook, as well as in conversations with Bert Kinner, who designed the aircraft. In turn, both Snook and Kinner were impressed with their new student. After soloing, Earhart asked for and received instruction in flying-related emergencies. She practiced these for hours, according to some, and soon achieved the skill of her instructor. Somehow, in 1921 Earhart saved enough money from her job at a telephone company to purchase her own airplane, a Kinner Airster. What income she had remaining after paying her living expenses funded her weekend flying.

With her passion for flying dominating her activities, as well as her need to hold down a full time job, Amelia had little time for a social life. The few men she met were usually encountered at the air shows she attended with Snook. She had little time for the young men who, to her, seemed unfocused and irresponsible, and she was more taken with older ones. In time, Amelia was attending concerts and other outings with a man named Samuel Chapman, originally from Massachusetts and a graduate of Tufts University. Chapman, in fact, was renting a room at the home of Earhart's parents. In time, the two became quite close.

During late 1921, Amelia entered the Air Rodeo held at the Sierra Airdome in Pasadena, California. She, along with another female pilot named Aloyfia McLintic, were the featured flyers. Amelia made the decision to attempt a new altitude record for women. She accomplished this by

ascending more than fourteen thousand feet.

~~Though Amelia was garnering some publicity as an accomplished aviatrix, she earned no money at it. In fact, she was comfortable in the notion that what she was doing was a sport, and the idea of making a living at it was foreign to her.~~

On May 16, 1923, Amelia was granted certificate number 6017 by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale. The certificate stated that she was certified as an “Aviator Pilot.” Of the thousands of such certificates that had been issued over the years, Earhart’s was one of only about twenty issued to women. Interestingly, on her application Earhart listed her birthdate as July 24, 1898, making her one year younger than she was, a deception she was to maintain for the rest of her life.

In 1924, Amy and Edwin’s oft-contentious marriage finally ended, and they were granted a divorce. Amy decided she wanted to move from Los Angeles to Boston, where daughter Muriel was attending college. Amy told Amelia that she would pay her tuition if she would return to Columbia and pursue her college education. Amy paid off the note on Earhart’s airplane, and a short time later was sold. With the money from the sale, Earhart purchased a Kinner automobile and drove her mother from Los Angeles to Boston. She then enrolled for the fall 1924 semester at Columbia University.

During the spring of 1925, Amy suffered some financial setbacks as a result of the deteriorating economy. Amelia left school and traveled to Medford, Massachusetts, to find a job. Once ensconced in her new residence, she joined the Boston chapter of the National Aeronautic Association. Bert Kinner learned of Earhart’s connection with a new airport near Quincy and offered her a plane to exhibit. In between demonstrations, said Kinner, she was free to fly the craft as much as she wished.

Samuel Chapman was apparently more enamored of Earhart than she was of him. He arrived in Massachusetts a few weeks after she did and landed a job at the Boston Edison Company. The two renewed their friendship, and a short time later Chapman proposed marriage. Not completely understanding Earhart’s streak of independence, he explained to her that he would not tolerate a wife working outside the home. She turned him down. The two remained friends and continued dating, but it never went beyond that. As time passed, Amelia moved in and out of other jobs, including teaching foreign students in a university extension program and being a social worker.

On May 21, 1927, Charles A. Lindbergh completed a nonstop solo flight from New York to Paris. Overnight he became a national hero and was celebrated throughout the world. Earhart read the newspaper accounts of the flight and the intrepid flyer with interest, excitement, and fascination.

The following year Earhart turned thirty. She had grown into a woman of numerous competencies and accomplishments and held a passion not only for flying but also for adventure. She was confident that her flying abilities and her dreams could propel her to the heights reached by Lindbergh. The international stage was being set for her grand entrance.

## Enter George Palmer Putnam

In 1928, Amelia Earhart was employed as a social worker at the Denison House, a settlement residence in Boston. Denison House was a focal point for immigrants. Here, they were provided instruction in the English language, nursing, dancing, and other topics. Relief programs were established as well as activities for the children and clubs for the adults. Earhart, who served as a teacher and helped generate publicity for the organization, was paid sixty dollars per month.

In April of that year, Earhart received a telephone call from Hilton H. Railey. Railey explained he was calling on behalf of New York publisher George Palmer Putnam and wanted to discuss the possibilities of her involvement in a flight that carried some amount of risk but offered incredible rewards. Amelia agreed to meet with Railey a few hours later to discuss his proposition.

Railey explained to Earhart that Admiral Richard E. Byrd's plane, a trimotor Fokker, was undergoing an intense mechanical examination and upgrade in Boston in preparation for a flight across the Atlantic. Byrd was a pioneering American aviator and noted polar explorer. The sponsors of the adventure desired to have an American woman involved in the project. During the early phases of planning for the flight, a Mrs. Frederick Guest was to be the female aviatrix. In fact, Guest, a wealthy native of London, had purchased the Fokker trimotor for the adventure. In the end, however, Guest decided it would be more appropriate for a younger woman to take her place.

The task of identifying and locating the appropriate female pilot to be involved in this adventure fell to George Palmer Putnam of the publishing house of G. P. Putnam and Sons. The publishing company had plans to commission an author to write a book about the landmark flight. At the time, Amelia Earhart had garnered an impressive level of visibility as a result of her flying accomplishments, one of a number of women involved in flying at the time. In addition, she was attractive, well spoken, and poised. She was, in short, a publicist's dream.

Earhart expressed her interest, and ten days later she found herself being subjected to an interview with the flight's sponsors at the offices of G. P. Putnam and Sons Publishing Company in New York City. Here she was introduced to George Palmer Putnam. The interview, as well as the beginning of her relationship with Putnam, was to forever change Earhart's path as well as the image of women throughout the world. It was also a catalyst that would lead to one of the greatest mysteries in history.

George Palmer Putnam II was born on September 7, 1887, in Rye, New York, a suburb of New York City near Long Island Sound. He was the grandson of and named after the publishing tycoon. Most people referred to George II as "G. P."

Knowing that his older brother, Robert, would eventually assume control of the publishing business, Putnam decided to seek his fortune and his adventure elsewhere. With little money, he traveled to Bend, Oregon, where he found some satisfaction. There, he married Dorothy Binney, a native of Connecticut, and before long a son, David, was born. Putnam prospered as a businessman

and publisher and was even elected mayor of Bend. In 1914, he was named secretary to Oregon's governor Withycombe.

In 1916, Putnam's father passed away. According to plans, brother Robert took over the publishing house. By this time, the United States had become heavily involved in World War I. In December 1918, Putnam enlisted in the army and was soon commissioned as an artillery officer. Not long afterward, Robert Putnam died as a result of the flu epidemic that swept the Eastern Seaboard, and G. P. returned to New York to become involved in the management of the publishing company. In large part because of his energy, enthusiasm, and keen business sense, the publishing house prospered over the next decade. During this time, Putnam honed the marketing and publicizing skills that were to serve him well for the rest of his life.

George Palmer Putnam II was also vitally interested in the movie business. He convinced film producer Jesse Lasky to back the making of Hollywood's first aviation movie, *Wings*, starring Clara Bow, Gary Cooper, and Buddy Rogers. It was also the first film to win an Academy Award. In addition, Putnam was instrumental in the publication of the book *We*, by Charles A. Lindbergh. It was a best seller and earned the publishing company a lot of money. With this particular success under his belt, Putnam was on the lookout for the next aviation best seller when he learned about Amelia Earhart.

Everyone present at the interview at the publishing house came away impressed with Earhart and lost no time in discussing a potential contract. After Earhart thanked everyone and was preparing to leave the office, Putnam offered to escort her to the train station. A few days after returning to Boston, Earhart received a phone call informing her that she had been accepted as part of the crew that would conduct the flight across the Atlantic.

It was immediately arranged for Earhart to meet the pilot, Wilmer L. Stultz, and the mechanic, Louis E. Gordon. She got along well with both men and eagerly anticipated the forthcoming adventure. She learned, however, that she was only to be a passenger and that she would not be handling any of the airplane's controls. In the time leading up to the flight, Earhart studied books on navigation and nautical astronomy.

While preparations were being made, Putnam, accompanied by his wife, Dorothy, made several trips to Boston to meet with Earhart. The couple invited her out to dinner, concerts, and social gatherings and introduced her to famous and prominent people.

Byrd's Fokker trimotor seaplane was named *Friendship*, and the crossing was tagged "The Friendship Flight." With Stultz, Gordon, and Earhart aboard, it lifted off from Boston Harbor near dawn on Sunday morning, June 3, 1928. The first stop was at Trepassey, Newfoundland, to refuel in preparation for the oceanic crossing. On arriving, however, weather conditions took a turn for the worse, and the scheduled takeoff for Europe was delayed for thirteen days.

While detained at Trepassey, Earhart discovered Stultz had a serious drinking problem. Already nervous and cautious because of her father's difficulties with drink, Earhart began to have concerns about Stultz's abilities to pilot the trimotor across the Atlantic.

Back home, Putnam was working overtime sending out press releases to the country's newspapers with the story of the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. Photographs of the tall, slim, and attractive Earhart captivated the attention of readers, and she was being referred to by the publicity-minded Putnam as "Lady Lindy."

On Sunday, June 17, the weather finally broke and was deemed suitable for takeoff. The seaplane lifted off at 11:00 a.m. bound for Europe. Twenty hours and forty minutes later, the plane landed at Burry Port, Wales. The crossing set a record, and Earhart went down in the history books as the first woman to have flown across the Atlantic Ocean. Though she never once assisted in flying the aircraft and was little more than a passenger, her life had been completely altered. Most of the publicity

centered on her. From this day on, Amelia Earhart would forevermore be a celebrity.

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# Celebrity

Amelia Earhart was stunned to discover that, on her arrival in Europe, she was regarded as a celebrity. Disembarking from the *Friendship* with nothing but the clothes she was wearing and a small pack that contained little more than a comb and a toothbrush, she was pulled into a whirlwind of activity. Within the next few days, she would be feted, participate in a parade, meet Lady Nancy Astor and department store magnate H. Gordon Selfridge, sign a book contract, purchase an airplane, and be gifted several trunks filled with fine, expensive clothes. As a result of Putnam's publicity campaign, Earhart had become the center of attention.

Throughout all of the notice and recognition she was receiving, Earhart was constantly trying to point out that all of the credit for the successful flight was due to Stultz and Gordon. The press, however, was interested only in Earhart, and the articles featured extensive portraits of her, often to the complete omission of the pilot and mechanic. Earhart's charm, good looks, and charisma steamrolled the reporters to the point of obsession.

Ten days after landing in Wales, Earhart, Stultz, and Gordon were in Southampton, England, preparing to board the *SS President Roosevelt* for the return trip to New York. Stultz remained drunk throughout most of the cruise and locked himself in his cabin. Earhart attempted to talk with him, but he resisted her efforts. She decided she would never work with Bill Stultz again.

The ship arrived at New York Harbor on July 6. Waiting there to greet the successful Atlantic trip was New York mayor Jimmy Walker in his own yacht. The *Friendship* crew boarded the vessel and was greeted by the mayor, George Palmer Putnam, and assorted dignitaries. Following this was a tickertape parade down Broadway and a series of receptions that lasted well into the next morning. G. P. Putnam appeared to have orchestrated most of the celebrations. In Earhart, he saw the value of her contrived and publicized accomplishment and the attendant fame, all seasoned with a charming and magnetic personality. It is clear that by this time Putnam viewed Earhart from several different perspectives, and one of them was related to the notion that she was highly marketable. Publisher and publicist Putnam had visions of even greater fame for Earhart coupled with more money and prestige.

Putnam arranged a tour for Earhart, Stultz, and Gordon that went from New York to Boston and then on to Chicago. Earhart was prominently displayed before huge audiences, always in the forefront of the pilot and mechanic. When reporters asked questions, they addressed only Earhart. When the tour was completed, Earhart locked herself away for a time to work on the book she would title *20 Hrs. 40 Min.: Our Flight in the Friendship*, the story of her trip across the Atlantic Ocean. When she finally came up for air and examined her accumulated mail, Earhart found she had received dozens of invitations for public appearances and lectures. Putnam kept her name in the newspapers, often accompanied by a photograph of her alongside some dignitary or celebrity.

Another major recognition had been bestowed on Earhart following the transatlantic flight. She was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the first woman to receive that honor. The DFC is



traditionally awarded to any officer or enlisted member of the armed forces who is distinguished as a result of heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. In 1929, Congress passed special legislation that allowed the award to be presented to Orville and Wilbur Wright. Since then, in addition to Amelia Earhart, other civilians who have won that award include Wiley Post, Jacqueline Cochran, Eugene Ely, and Roscoe Turner. By September, Earhart had finished her book and decided it was time to start flying again.

The first thing Earhart did was to make a solo flight cross-country to California in her new airplane, an Avro Avian she had purchased from Lady Heath. It was the first Atlantic-to-Pacific coast flight ever by a woman. While in California, she attended the National Air Races. When she returned to New York on October 16, she went straight to work as a member of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine editorial staff.

On March 29, 1929, Earhart passed the tests for a transport pilot license from the Department of Commerce. She was now certified as a transport pilot, one of only seven women to have earned the ranking.

During the summer of 1929, Earhart was hired by Transcontinental Air Transport to use her celebrity to lobby for the notion that flying was safe for women. TAT, which would evolve into Trans World Airlines, had just opened up air service from New York to Los Angeles and was soliciting customers. On July 7, the first flight lifted off from New York. Earhart was among the passengers. The plane made a fuel stop in Phoenix, where it was greeted by Charles Lindbergh and his wife, Anne. The Lindberghs flew the rest of the way to Los Angeles in the company of the aviatrix.

Earhart eventually traded in her Avro Avian for a Lockheed Vega. The single-pilot plane boasted a nine-cylinder Pratt and Whitney engine. Earhart entered her aircraft in the first all-female air race at Clover Field in Santa Monica, California. Nineteen of the most well-known women pilots in America were entered. They took off on August 18 bound for Cleveland, Ohio. Earhart came in third.

At Cleveland, a meeting was held for the purpose of establishing an association of licensed women pilots. Invitations had been sent to 120 certified aviatrices, and ninety-nine showed up. Earhart was elected first president of the group, which named itself the Ninety-Nines.

On November 22, 1929, Earhart was in Los Angeles with her Lockheed Vega to attempt a new women's speed record. Her average speed was 184.17 mph. The principal purpose of the trip as designed by George Putnam, however, was to keep her face and activities in the news and in front of the public.

Earhart went on to set three world speed records in her Lockheed Vega on June 25 and July 5, 1930. Around this time, air travel was a young yet growing enterprise, and Earhart found herself in the middle of it. She partnered with Paul Collins and Eugene Vidal to establish a new airline. Collins and Vidal had been involved with the development of Transcontinental Air Transport. Earhart was to be vice president of public relations and was primarily associated with the promotion of an hourly shuttle connecting New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. On September 1, 1930, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington Airways opened for business. In a short time, NYPWA was renamed a more manageable Ludington Line. Charles and Nicholas Ludington were the primary financial backers for the line. With her executive responsibilities with TAT, the Ludington Line, and her schedule of paid lectures and personal appearances, Earhart was traveling most of every week. She was also becoming one of the most recognizable and prominent women not only in the United States but in the world.

## Marriage

George Palmer Putnam II remained busy booking appearances for Earhart as well as making certain that her activities and accomplishments were being reported in the nation's major newspapers. In 1930, Putnam's uncle passed away, leaving his interest in G. P. Putnam's Sons Publishing Company to his son, Palmer C. Putnam. George II had been with the company for ten years. For several weeks, Palmer and George discussed the publishing business in general and the future of the family publishing company in particular. In the end, George sold Palmer his interest in the business. Some money exchanged hands. In addition, Palmer presented George with a promissory note for \$100,000. George immediately went to work for another New York publishing company—Brewer and Warren.

While Putnam was busy promoting Earhart and spending much of his time with her in Los Angeles, his wife, Dorothy, was in Las Vegas filing for divorce. At the time, many were convinced Putnam had eyes only for Earhart and that it became quite obvious to his wife. The divorce was granted on December 19, 1929. Earhart and Putnam were married on February 7, 1931. She was thirty-three years old; he was forty-three. Many have argued that the marriage for these two intense, career-minded individuals was one of convenience and profit. Others have maintained the position that the two were, in fact, deeply in love and quite devoted to each other. Putnam was an adept manager and coordinator of publicity, both of which were vital to Earhart's expanding career. And for Putnam, Earhart was a valuable commodity, one that had the potential for many years of cash flow from books and personal appearances. It was said that the two made an agreement that if one or the other decided that their individual careers were not progressing as a result of the marriage, they would have it dissolved. Following the wedding, both Earhart and Putnam were so busy with their careers that they had little opportunity for a honeymoon. The newlyweds settled in at Putnam's home in Rye, New York.

Author Vincent Loomis wrote that Earhart's friends were convinced Putnam was not in love with Amelia nor she with him. The arrangement, says Loomis, "was one that cemented their future partnership in aviation. She wanted to fly; he wanted to promote her as the best flyer in the world." Putnam's greatest skill was as a promoter, and with Earhart he saw a huge payoff. Putnam was also regarded by many as a master manipulator, and in truth he was proved to be such when he assumed responsibility for Earhart's career.

The fact is, despite all of the publicity and exposure, Amelia Earhart was an average pilot, no better or worse than a handful of other female aviatrixes during that period. In head-to-head flying competitions, Earhart rarely won and at times placed last. Earhart, however, had several things going for her relative to her climb toward celebrity: she was attractive, she had a sense of style (women began to dress like her), she was an excellent writer, she had poise and charm, she was fearless, and most of all, she was married to an experienced and polished publicist. The public Amelia Earhart, in the end, was a product of marketing and publicity.

Shortly after her marriage, Earhart was introduced to a new kind of aircraft—the autogyro, a forerunner to the helicopter. The manufacturer of the autogyro employed Earhart to demonstrate the new invention. Following a relatively short instruction period, Earhart took off in the autogyro and climbed to 18,415 feet, a record height. Numerous headlines were generated by Putnam and filed across the country and the world relative to this accomplishment. Between May 29 and June 6, 1931, Earhart flew an autogyro from Newark, New Jersey, to Oakland, California, becoming the first woman to do so. Press releases followed.

So busy was Earhart that she was rarely seen with Putnam. Little time passed before she was once again in the nation's headlines, this time with new plans to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean in her Lockheed Vega. Prior to the flight, Earhart steeped herself in learning how to pilot via instruments. Heretofore, Earhart flew using only maps and by sophisticated guesswork, the so-called seat-of-the-pants flying technique.

On May 20, 1932, Earhart took off from Harbor Grace, Newfoundland. Thirteen hours and thirty minutes later, she landed at Londonderry in Northern Ireland, the first woman to have flown solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Following her amazing performance was an extended tour of Europe, where she was feted almost daily. She was received by royalty and by the pope. During the tour, she was joined by Putnam. At one point, Earhart and Putnam found themselves in the company of Archbishop Pacelli, who later became Pope Pius XII, and a priest named James Francis Kelley. Though no one could have known at the time, Father Kelley would reappear thirteen years later to play an important role in Amelia Earhart's life.

When Earhart and her husband returned to New York, she was lauded as the “first lady of the air.” One newspaper proclaimed her the best-known woman in the world. Parades followed, and soon she was inundated with more invitations for public appearances. Life was busy for Amelia Earhart.

A short time following her Newfoundland-to-Ireland flight, Earhart received a telegram of congratulations from Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt, who, at the time, was the governor of New York. George Putnam soon resigned from Brewer and Warren and was shortly thereafter named the head of the editorial board for Paramount, the motion picture company. He maintained offices in New York and Hollywood in order to keep up with his new enterprises. When time permitted, Earhart would often join him at the studios. In August 1932, she flew the Lockheed to Los Angeles. On the return trip, she left Los Angeles on August 24 and flew nonstop to Newark, New Jersey, in nine hours and five minutes. The distance of 2,447 miles without refueling was a new women's record.

Late in 1932, Earhart and husband Putnam were invited to dine with Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt at their Hyde Park estate. The four soon became close friends. Earhart and Putnam were invited to Roosevelt's inauguration following his election to the presidency.

Little did Earhart realize that Roosevelt and his staff would soon impress upon her the need for her participation in a mission vital to the nation's welfare. During the 1930s, according to author David K. Bowman, Roosevelt often asked “wealthy and well-connected friends and amateurs to accept intelligence assignments while on their travels.” During the impending war with Japan, the United States was in desperate need of intelligence.

## Hawaii to California

**B**y the end of 1932, Amelia Earhart was thirty-five years of age with a long list of impressive accomplishments. She continued to tour the country lecturing to sold-out venues. Though the Ludington Line went out of business, a short time later the principals Earhart, Collins, and Vidal, along with an investor named Sam Solomon, developed yet another airline. It was initially named National Airways but soon came to be called Boston-Maine Airways. Earhart was named vice president. During the incorporation, Vidal was named director of the Bureau of Air Commerce in Washington, D.C. In time, Boston-Maine Airways grew to be part of the Delta Air Lines system.

As president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt sponsored a number of new airports and airways facilities. He also saw the need for a more sophisticated radiotelegraph communications and navigation system. In addition, Roosevelt was also instrumental in establishing strategically placed airports and landing strips, along with communications facilities, throughout much of the world where the United States had interests.

In 1933, a cadre of Hawaiian businessmen sponsored a flight from Hawaii to the West Coast of the United States, offering a prize of \$10,000. Earhart professed interest. It would be another challenge, another payday, and another opportunity to remain in the public eye.

In 1934, Earhart hired Paul Mantz as her technical adviser. His job was to prepare her Vega for the flight from Hawaii to California. Mantz came with a hefty set of credentials: he owned United Air Services, he had an excellent pilot rating in the army (though he had been discharged for not following orders), and he was a stunt pilot for motion pictures. Like Earhart, Mantz owned and flew a Lockheed Vega.

Recent flying regulations required any aircraft crossing oceans to have a radio transmitter powerful enough to maintain continuous communication. For the Vega, Earhart required a two-channel, 3,105-kilocycle radio for airway and nighttime communications and 6,210 kilocycles for long-range daytime transmissions. The 6,210-kilocycle transmitter had a longer range. Such systems required an effective antenna. For the Vega, Mantz installed a state-of-the-art trailing wire antenna that could be reeled in and out much like a fishing line.

During the Christmas holidays of 1934, Earhart, along with Mantz and his wife, took a liner to Hawaii. Her Vega was strapped to the tennis deck of the ship and offloaded onto a barge for transportation to Fleet Air Base in Pearl Harbor. From here it was flown to Wheeler Field for a final checkup before undertaking the transpacific flight.

At 4:44 p.m. Hawaiian Standard Time on January 11, 1935, Earhart took off from Wheeler Field. One hour later, she reeled out the trailing wire antenna and broadcast her first message on 3,105 kilocycles. Putnam was listening to the transmission in Honolulu and responded that her signal had less volume than it should have and was difficult to understand. Throughout the flight, Earhart transmitted on both 3,105 and 6,210 kilocycles with mixed results but was by and large pleased with

the system. Radio communication difficulties were to plague Earhart in the future.

~~Eighteen hours and seventeen minutes later, Earhart landed at Oakland. A crowd estimated to number five thousand was there to welcome her. At the time, Earhart was the only woman to have flown across the Pacific Ocean from Hawaii and the only pilot to accomplish it solo. Once again, she made the front pages. The flight, Earhart knew, would guarantee her a positive image and an enduring position in aviation. With encouragement from Putnam, she was beginning to entertain the notion of one of the greatest adventures ever—an around-the-world flight.~~

More flights followed, more praises heaped upon her. Putnam set about the task of raising money to purchase a newer and better aircraft, one that could make an around-the-world voyage.

In the meantime, Putnam's cousin, Palmer, was forced to declare bankruptcy, one of the results being that he still owed G. P. \$75,000 that would never be paid. Though still employed by Paramount Pictures, G. P.'s paycheck was insufficient for him to maintain the lifestyle to which he had become accustomed. Furthermore, it certainly would not fund a new airplane for Earhart.

In 1935, after renting out the house in Rye, New York, Putnam and Earhart moved into a small house in Toluca Lake, California, a suburb of North Hollywood. Amelia decided to enter her Vega in the National Air Races in Cleveland to be held in August. She came in fifth place and won \$500. After returning to California, Earhart went into business with Mantz setting up a flight school. G. P. would handle the publicity. Earhart and Mantz were described as a "solid team" and were rarely seen apart.

Trouble was not long in coming. In September, Myrtle Mantz sued her husband for divorce, naming Earhart as the other woman responsible for the breakup. Before the year was out, Mantz and Putnam grew at odds with each other over the way the latter conducted business.

In November, Earhart and Putnam attended a dinner hosted by the president of Purdue University. At the time, Earhart was serving as a parttime counselor for women at the school. During the event, Earhart and Putnam were introduced to a number of the university's benefactors, including the wealthy industrialist David Ross. Putnam explained the need for a new airplane suitable for an around-the-world journey but stated that the aircraft could also serve as a flying laboratory for Purdue's aviation research orientation. Eighty thousand dollars was raised, and within weeks a new twin-engine Lockheed Electra was delivered.

Earhart lost no time in contacting Harry Manning. Earhart first met Manning after her trip across the Atlantic with Stultz and Gordon. Manning was the captain of the SS *Roosevelt*, which carried the crew back to the United States. Later, Manning would be awarded a Congressional Medal of Honor for rescuing the crew of a freighter during a severe Atlantic storm. Manning was also a pilot and was regarded by some as a competent course plotter. Earhart invited Manning to accompany her on the around-the-world flight as her navigator.

Flights around the world had been made previously. In 1924, a U.S. Army Air Service plane made the trip in 175 days. In 1932, a man named Wolfgang von Gronau made it in 110 days in a seaplane. Wiley Post, flying solo in 1933, did it in seven days and eighteen hours. None of these flights, however, crossed the wide expanse of the Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, never had a woman attempted such a feat. In 1936, when time permitted, Earhart and Manning would meet in New York to discuss details of her trip.

One year earlier, Pan American Airways captain Edwin Musick and navigator Fred Noonan surveyed the Pacific Ocean in order to determine the practicality of transoceanic flights. A major problem involved with such an undertaking was the scarcity and incompatibility of communications systems. The two men would eventually make recommendations to facilitate travel across the wide Pacific. Fred Noonan would soon assume a consequential role in Earhart's future.

## Flight around the World: Preparation

Both Amelia Earhart and G. P. Putnam were riding the high-profile publicity and financial wave of Earhart's accomplishments and popularity during the late 1920s and early 1930s. As a result of the efforts of Putnam, Earhart had her name attached to lines of luggage, suits, pajamas, sports outfits, and stationery.

Putnam worked almost full time keeping Earhart's name and photograph in the nation's and the world's newspapers. Now, he realized, was the time for the greatest accomplishment ever for a woman pilot—an around-the-world flight. Though there were a number of skilled and credentialed female pilots in the United States, they had neither the charisma of Amelia Earhart nor the publicity machine in the form of the skilled G. P. Putnam backing them. It was time.

Most of Earhart's aerial activities and accomplishments were widely publicized, but her flying disasters were kept out of the newspapers as much as Putnam could manage it. Once, when taking off at the Abilene, Texas, airport, Earhart crashed her plane. Later, a letter of reprimand was sent to her from the Department of Commerce. At least one newspaper report described Earhart as having been careless and using bad judgment.

On September 17, 1931, Earhart wrecked the Pitcairn autogyro while attempting a landing at Detroit. Earhart was aware that among many flyers—male and female alike—there was not much regard for her ability as a pilot. According to most observers, her flying skills were at best average. Louise Thaden noted that Earhart “was able to follow a manual to the letter, but her flying instincts were not well honed.” In order to bolster her image and reputation, Earhart knew she needed to make significant flying achievement.

Earhart's new airplane was a Lockheed Electra 10E, registration number NR16020. Built to certain specifications, however, this Electra had larger Pratt and Whitney engines, larger fuel tanks, and no cabin windows. Earhart hired Ruckins “Bo” McNeely as a full-time mechanic. McNeely had six years of experience as an overhaul mechanic with Pratt and Whitney. Earhart tested the Electra for the first time on July 21, 1936, and deemed it suitable. Three days later she took possession of it. It was her thirty-ninth birthday.

For further testing and to gain more experience with the new craft, Earhart entered the 1936 New York to Los Angeles Bendix Air Race. With copilot Helen Richey, she finished last in a field of five and received \$500 in prize money. Earhart consoled herself about the loss by insisting that the thirty hours of flying time in the new Electra was worth the effort.

For the next several weeks, Earhart studied maps and charts and made preliminary plans for an around-the-world flight. The details for such an undertaking were massive, including licensing in the different countries, passports, visas, landing rights, overflying rights, maintenance, communications, weather, fuel availability, insurance, lodging, finances, and more. Added to this mound of details was the fact that Earhart wanted to fly across the Pacific Ocean. Previous around-the-world flights

bypassed this huge body of water by navigating close to the coasts of Canada, Alaska, Japan, China, and Southeast Asia. For Earhart, it would be necessary to stop at one or more locations in the ocean for refueling and maintenance.

In anticipation of the need for future commercial air routes, the Bureau of Air Commerce had established small colonies on some remote Pacific Islands and constructed airfields. In 1936, this responsibility was turned over to the Department of the Interior. One of the locations selected was Howland Island, some 1,900 miles southwest of the Hawaiian Islands. Howland Island was to figure prominently in Earhart's future.

Earhart soon realized she needed assistance with the immense logistics of the flight. She turned to her friend, Eleanor Roosevelt. With the help of the First Lady and her husband, a rather odd decision had been arrived at: the Department of State and the U.S. Navy assumed the responsibilities for most of the arrangements for the around-the-world civilian flight, an adventure that many referred to as a "stunt."

Manning determined that telegraphy would be an utmost necessity for the flight. In order to communicate with coastal stations and ships at sea and for direction finding, it would be essential to transmit on the international standard distress and calling frequency of 500 kilocycles. Celestial navigation would be helpful, but in order to locate a tiny speck such as Howland Island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean would, according to Manning, require more sophisticated instruments.

In November, Earhart went to New York to discuss her communication needs with a representative of the Western Electric Company. Arrangements for transmitting and receiving on 500 kilocycles were made, but such transmissions would require a 250-foot trailing wire antenna. A Bendix radio receiver was installed in the Electra. It was a prototype and had, in fact, just been manufactured but never field-tested. The receiver would accommodate 200 kilocycles through 10,000 kilocycles.

On February 12, 1937, Earhart publicly announced her plans for the around-the-world flight. With Putnam's help, the announcement was carried in newspapers in dozens of countries. With her at the announcement was Harry Manning, whom she introduced as her navigator. On February 17, Earhart, Putnam, Manning, and McNeely set out in the Electra from the Newark airport and headed west. Her first stop was Cleveland, Ohio, and on the following morning they would fly to Burbank, California. Manning was the navigator. At one point, Manning provided a position report to Earhart indicating that they were in Kansas. In truth, however, they were in Oklahoma several miles south of the Kansas border. Putnam began manifesting concerns about Manning's ability to navigate.

In March, Pan American Airways agreed to assist Earhart with her flight. In the meantime, Manning attempted to familiarize himself with the Bendix receiver and experienced difficulties at the outset. When Earhart tried the equipment, it likewise frustrated her. Putnam continued to harbor suspicions related to Manning's navigational abilities and confessed this to Earhart. It was suggested that they allow Manning to navigate them on a flight from Burbank to San Francisco, swing out some distance over the ocean for the return flight, and see whether he could route them back to the point of origin. Employing the newly installed direction-finding apparatus as well as celestial navigation, Manning was off by twenty miles by the time they approached Burbank on the return leg of the trip. Putnam determined that it would be necessary to obtain either a more sophisticated radio direction finder or a more competent navigator.

On returning to Burbank, Putnam made arrangements to meet with a man named Fred Noonan. Noonan had been the chief navigator for Pan American Airways, had recently left the job, and was living in Oakland. Noonan was forty-three years old, had been employed by Pan American for seven years, and was regarded by many as one of the top aerial navigators in the world.

Putnam had suggested to Mantz that he accompany Earhart on the first leg of the flight from

Oakland to Honolulu. He agreed. On landing, Mantz would then be responsible for monitoring the servicing for the aircraft. True to his calling, Putnam had arranged for Earhart to have several press conferences in Honolulu. Putnam planned to ask Noonan to accompany Manning to aid in the navigation. Manning, for his part, often expressed the opinion that Earhart lacked sufficient experience with the aircraft for an around-the-world flight. Author Vincent Loomis expressed the opinion that, based on Earhart's history, she was not a good candidate for long-distance flying. He pointed out that she suffered from recurring bouts of illness after long periods of stress and that the tension of a long flight could lead to impaired judgment.

Putnam and Manning met with Noonan. Noonan agreed to travel with them as far as Howland Island. During this portion of the flight, he would have a chance to examine the navigational equipment. Noonan also requested an octant for celestial navigation. The Electra's call letters would be KHAQQ and would transmit on 500, 3,105, or 6,210 kilocycles using both telegraphy and voice during the flight.



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