

The May Meeting Tuesday, May 28, 2013, 3:00 p. m. The McMillan Museum on the JDCC Campus

The Program

Rhett Johnson, wildlife biologist and forester, will speak about his work at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center and the Longleaf Alliance

More about Our Speaker

Rhett Johnson is a wildlife biologist and forester with degrees from North Carolina State University and Clemson University.

Rhett worked as a wildlife researcher at the Belle Baruch Forest Science Institute where he participated in studies on songbirds, red-cockaded woodpeckers, and feral hogs before he accepted the position as the first Director of Auburn University's teaching and research forest, the Solon Dixon



Rhett Johnson at a Book Signing

Forestry Center near Andalusia, Alabama.

In 1995, Rhett and Dean Gjerstad, another Auburn School of Forestry faculty member, co-founded the Longleaf Alliance. After retirement from Auburn in 2006, Rhett continued

in his role with the Alliance, eventually becoming the President of the Longleaf Alliance, Inc., the non-profit organization that the Longleaf Alliance became.

Rhett has served as the President of

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The May ECHS Meeting Tuesday, May 25, 2013

Brian Rucker, author and professor of history at Pensacola State College, will present a program on local history.

Brian's new book, Treasures of the Panhandle, explores the natural and historical resources of West Florida.

Brian is also the author of Arcadia: Florida's Premier Antebellum Industrial Park and Image and Reality: Tourism in Antebellum Pensacola.

Brian has previously given programs for ECHS.



Longleaf Pine Forest Source, Longleaf Alliance

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More about Our Speaker

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the Alabama Wildlife Federation, Chair of the Alabama Chapter of the Wildlife Society, Chair of both the Alabama Society of American Foresters and the Southeastern SAF, and Chair of the Alabama State Board of Registration for Foresters.

He was named a Wildlife Conservationist of the Year in Alabama in 1985 and Forest Conservationist of the Year in Alabama in 2005. He is an SAF Fellow and was elected to the Alabama Forestry Hall of Fame in 2005 €

The Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center

The Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center was a gift to Auburn University from Solon and Martha Dixon, residents of Andalusia, Alabama. Solon Dixon's love of natural resources, Auburn University and young people created a vision that became reality in 1978 with his donation of 5350 acres, the Dixon family home-site and funds for the creation of the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center.

Mr. Dixon wanted a place where young people could experience nature, while learning about forestry, wildlife and the many other aspects of natural resources management. He envisioned a place for applied teaching and learning, where people could see and experience the effects of management practices.

At the time, this gift was the largest ever made to Auburn University by a living donor.

One of the finest field facilities of its type in the nation," the Dixon Center offers comfortable, efficient classroom and living accommodations and a diverse 5,300 acre "working forest" for the benefit of students and visitors alike.

Since its dedication in 1980, the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center has managed its natural resources and programs to meet the objectives of:

(1) providing quality natural resource education to a



**Martha and Solon
Dixon**



**Dixon Home
Now Used as Conference Center**

variety of user groups, particularly Auburn University students; (2) providing a base for and support of research efforts in natural resource fields; (3) serving as a source of information and technology transfer from the scientific community to the general public; and (4) managing its own natural resources wisely and economically to provide income for the Center's programs.

The campus facilities include two "bunkhouse style" dormitories and five "hotel style" dorms with private/semi-private accommodations. A separate private/semi-private staff quarters is available for visiting faculty. Meals are prepared in a full service kitchen/dining hall, while most of the Center's classroom activities take place in the Charles Dixon Auditorium. This is a versatile building constructed with a gift from Solon Dixon's sister-in-law, Mrs. Thelma Dixon in memory of her late husband.

Other buildings include the Martha Dixon Administration Building, the recreation building, and the maintenance shop. Residences for the Center Director and Assistant Director are located on the site, as is the historic Dixon Family home, built in the 1830's and maintained as a repository of family and regional memorabilia.

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The Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center

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Text and pictures from <http://sdfec.auburn.edu/history.html>. €



A Classroom in the Education Center



The Landscape

The Longleaf Pine Forests of the Southeastern United States



Wherever it grew, this distinctive forest cover transformed the landscape and the communities – human and natural -- that interacted with it. No other state had more diversity of longleaf habitat than Alabama and few other states owe so much of their cultural and economic history to the longleaf forest.

The fact that Alabama is the most biologically diverse eastern state is due, in large measure, to the impact of longleaf pine on the state's ecosystems. Alabama also plays a key role in the survival of longleaf pines and the longleaf forest, and thus in preserving eastern North American biodiversity.

The above quote from a recent presentation at Archtreas by Bill Finch, author of Longleaf: The Tree that Made Alabama describes the importance of the longleaf forests to Alabama.

The following article is from the Longleaf Alliance website giving an overview of these longleaf forests <http://www.longleafalliance.org/gallery>. Pictures and text are from the site.

The average American's view of the natural communities of the Southeastern U.S. is that it is comprised mainly of swamps, alligators and big, old moss-hung cypress trees. On the contrary to this view, when early explorers visited the southeastern region they saw "a vast forest of the most stately pine trees that can be imagined, planted by nature at a moderate distance. . . enameled with a variety of

flowering shrubs." Fire defined where the longleaf pine forest was found and fostered an ecosystem diverse in plants and animals.

Longleaf pine's domain was vast. By all accounts, the longleaf pine forest dominated the southern landscape. Starting in southwest Virginia, the longleaf pine forest stretched southward through nine states eventually stopping in east Texas (over 140,000 square miles). Unlike today, other southern pine species such as loblolly and slash pine were mostly relegated to areas where fire did not burn frequently (such as the edges of streams and ponds).

The primeval pine forest seen by early explorers to the southeastern U.S. shared several fundamental characteristics:

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The Longleaf Pine Forest of the Southeastern States

(Continued from page 3)

- ♦ Tall, majestic, and ancient stands dominated by a single species of tree - the Longleaf Pine;
- ♦ A conspicuous lack of mid-story trees and shrubs presented a scenic vista through the forest;
- ♦ A well developed ground layer, dominated by bunch grasses helped to create a manicured park-like appearance;
- ♦ A high diversity of plants in the ground layer;
- ♦ Numerous wildlife species that were dependent upon the open pine forest;
- ♦ Frequent fires that skimmed across the ground's surface acted as the thread which held the longleaf pine forest together; and
- ♦ Found across a variety of habitat types.

For countless generations, cultures were both transformed by and helped to transform the longleaf piney woods. However, starting about 150 years ago, over-exploitation of the longleaf pine forest accelerated tremendously and the face of the southern landscape changed radically €



Young Longleaf Pine

Young longleaf pine seedlings resemble bunches of grass as root systems develop, in what is called the "grass stage," and are highly resistant to fire. As the trees begin to grow trunks they become more vulnerable to fire. Longleaf pine trees grow quickly due to the extensive root system deployed during the grass stage.



Pictures and their texts are from the Encyclopedia of Alabama <<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1407>>.

Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge
The 9,000-acre Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge is located in Calhoun County near Anniston. It is home to one of the last remaining stands of old-growth longleaf pine trees in the state.

White Topped Pitcher Plant

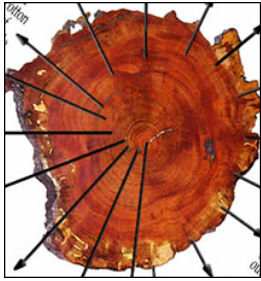
A field of white-topped pitcher plants ornament the Minimac Bog in Baldwin County, Alabama. The plants bloom in March and April. They, like many species, are threatened by deforestation and habitat destruction



Felling Longleaf Pines

Loggers use a cross-cut saw to fell longleaf pine trees. This image was taken during the early twentieth century in Clay County.

Memoirs of a Forest



Picture the rings in this slice of a tree as telling the story of its life as a longleaf pine that lived through all the stages of the development and loss of the virgin forests of the southeast.

Article from <http://www.longleafalliance.org/past-present/memoirs-of-a-forest>

In a little over 150 years, the longleaf pine forest transitioned from a forest that dominated the southern landscape to one of near anonymity. Although remnants of this once great forest abound, they are often only noticeable to the ardent observer.

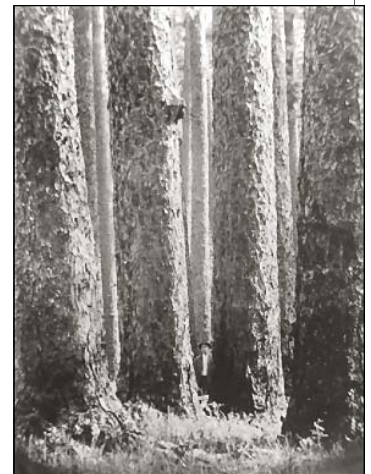
- ◆ 1680-Tree begins to grow (Colonial population 121, 000: longleaf acreage 90 million).
- ◆ 1688-Free Range piney woods' cattle herd reaches 20,000 in Spanish Florida.
- ◆ 1714-Harvesting of longleaf pine accessible along water ways begins.
- ◆ 1715-Colonies are main source of tar and pitch for British navy vessels.
- ◆ 1780-British and Americans skirmish in longleaf forest at the Battle of Camden, S.C.
- ◆ 1790-Naturalist William Bartram explores the longleaf pine range.
- ◆ 1793-The cotton gin is invented making growing short staple cotton profitable. Many virgin strands of longleaf pine were felled to provide farmland.
- ◆ 1834-Distillation of turpentine possible, Era of massive turpentine operations begins.
- ◆ 1860-Feral hogs reach saturation density on open range of longleaf pine landscape.
- ◆ 1870-Airy longleaf pine forest in places like Thomasville, Georgia attract the attention of many vacationing North Americans.
- ◆ 1880-Virgin longleaf forest begins to attract the interest and capital of Northern logging companies.
- ◆ 1909-Production of longleaf pine lumber peaks.
- ◆ 1920-Few virgin stands of longleaf pine left untouched by the saw. Vast acreages are cutover.
- ◆ 1928-The Dixie Crusade begins, an effort to prevent forest fires through education.
- ◆ 1938- The Great Southern Lumber Co. (largest sawmill in the world) runs out of longleaf to cut and doors close.
- ◆ 1994-Last crop of longleaf pine worked for turpentine.
- ◆ 1996-Tree is struck by lightning and dies (U. S. population 248,909,873; longleaf pine acreage 3 million). €



To the left and below to the right. Giant Virgin Long-Leaf Yellow, Heart Pine in the Bogalusa, Louisiana Forest, circa 1907.

Bogalusa was the location of the Great Southern Lumber Co.

From the website at <http://www.willbranch.net/Great%20Southern%20History.htm>.



Picture below shows a longleaf forest before and after clear cutting. Picture from Auburn University Library.



ECHS
Certificate of Appreciation for
John Byard Swift, Jr.
October 3, 1923–February 23, 2013

Whereas, John Byard Swift, Jr. has Distinguished Himself through:

- ♦ His Leadership and Devotion to the Preservation of History in Escambia County, Alabama,
- ♦ His Distinguished Service as Commander of an LCI Ship Assigned to the Asian Theater,
- ♦ His Effective Leadership of the Swift Hunter Lumber Company Which Later Became Swift Lumber Company that Has Nearly Twenty Years in the Southern Forest Products Industry
- ♦ His Support of the Turtle Point Environmental Science Center in Flomaton, Alabama
- ♦ His Service to the Atmore Historical Society as a President and Longtime Member, and,
- ♦ His Corporative Work with the Escambia County Historic Society to Further Historical Preservation,

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Escambia County Historical Society Commends and Honors the Memory of John Byard Swift, Jr.

Be It Further Resolved, that This Resolution Be Presented to the Swift Family and the Atmore Historical Society, in recognition and Appreciation of the Contributions and Accomplishments, and that This Resolution Shall Be a Permanent Part of the Official Minutes of the April 23, 2013 Minutes and Shall Be Published in the Newsletter of the Escambia County (Alabama) Historical Society. €

Pictured to the Right, going from left to right are John Byard Swift, Jr., George Robinson Swift, Sr., and George Robinson Swift, Jr. at the Swift Lumber Company.



To the Left, John Byard Swift, Jr., Age 90. Below, From June 2011, John Byard Swift, Jr, receives a plaque for his work in restoring the Boy Scout Hut in Atmore. To the left of Mr. Swift, is Nell Wiggins, to the right presenting the award, Leadership Atmore Alumni president Nancy Helton, and Atmore Mayor Howard Shell. Picture and text from the Atmore Advance.



News and Announcements



Thomas McMillan Museum Sign

The sign for the museum went missing some months back and there's no room in the college budget to replace it. Inmates at the Fountain Correctional facility have

a carpenter shop and we may be able to have a new one made for very little.

You may be able to help - if you have ideas for a new sign's design or if you like it the way it was, please let us know. If you wish to donate toward its replacement, let us know that, too. It will likely be shortened to read "McMillan Museum" and if possible, have "of Escambia County Cultural and Natural History" added.

West Florida Genealogical Society Meeting

Date: June 1, 2013 - Saturday; **Place:** West Florida Genealogy Library. 5740 N. 9th Ave, Pensacola, FL. 850-494-7373;; **Time:** 10:00 AM ; **Meeting:** Speaker: Bruce Rove; **Topic:** Family Tree Maker 2012

Bruce Rover, former WFGS (West Florida Genealogy Society) president, will demonstrate use of the 2012 Family Tree Maker program, to include inputting data and photos, syncing data to your Ancestry.com site, generating various family pedigree charts and listing references, among other things.

For more information, contact Cynthia Dean 850-432-7072 <cgdean@bellsouth.net>.

Fort Crawford Archeological Dig

Tom McMillan reports that the team from the University of South Alabama conducting the search for the exact location of Fort Crawford has expanded the area to be examined.

The "dig" will now include the area of the Fort Crawford Cemetery. The archeology team doing the search will use the report prepared by the team from Troy University, which was done several years ago, as a guide for promising places for further exploration..

ECHS Scholarship

After examining the applications, the ECHS Scholarship Committee has named Andrew Jordan Sessions of Escambia Academy to receive the award for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Jacque Stone, chairman of the committee, comments that all of the applicants were outstanding students, submitting excellent essays for the application process..

Other members of the Scholarship Committee are Susan Crawford and Barbara Page.

Alabama Room Work-Day

Since the work of compiling, filing, and indexing material is never done, ECHS will once again have work days.

The first work day will be Tuesday, June 18, 2013, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Bring a brown bag lunch and join other volunteers to help sort and file material.

Plan on coming as early as you can and staying as long as you can.

Refreshments for ECHS Meetings

Remember that ECHS members now bring a dish, finger food, for the refreshments after the program. One volunteer is responsible for furnishing drinks. A Sign-Up Sheet will be passed around at the meeting for volunteers for furnishing the drinks.

So plan on bringing a dish to the May Meeting. Carolyn Jennings has volunteered to furnish the drinks..

Upcoming 2013 Programs for Architreasts

June 20 *The Emancipation Proclamation in War-time Alabama, 1863** by John Kvach: **July 18** *Cars Fell on Alabama: The Automotive Industry Comes to Alabama* by Bill Taylor: **August 15** *White Paths, Red Paths: Fort Mims and the Alabama Frontier** by Greg Waselkov: **September 19** *While the World Watched: A Birmingham Bombing Survivor Remembers** : by Carolyn M. McKinstry:: **October 17** *Alabama and the War of 1812** by Jeanne & David Heidler: **November 21** *Diamonds in the Rough: A History of Alabama's Cahaba Coal Field* by James S. Day: **December 19** *Alabama's Got the Boll Weevil Blues* by James C. Giesen.

Snapshots of the April 2013 ECHS Meeting



Our Business Members

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The ECHS *Journal* Section

Madagascar Expedition: Our Hilarious First Day Experience

**By Jacques Doucette,
Assistant**

22 March 2013 - Time is 8:48 pm EAS, Temp - 70°F (fallen 11 degrees in three hours).

Darryl Searcy (He seems to have acquired the nickname "Dobbs" from the young graduate students who accompanied him.) asked one student each day to write about his experiences of that day. Jacques writes about the first day.

We arrived in Rome having had a very pleasant Atlantic flight on Lufthanza. Actually, we arrived a bit early. Our group leader wanted all the expedition crew to be processed and ready to alleviate the added stress of pushing and shoving. It turned out, however, that the queues for international flights wouldn't open for another two hours, as they are not bound by American rules and regulations unless the flight is scheduled to enter American air space.

We were stranded in the International Departures lounge with nothing to do but gaze at all the carts being pushed around and distributing stuff to the various food stalls throughout the Leonardo da Vinci airport; drizzled ham snack, baked offal of steak pie, and horrid stuff that most of us had never heard of, and lots and lots of spumoni. Thank goodness we had our own supply of delicious Swiss chocolates and Deutsch streusel um ein Leben Lang (coffee cake).

We settled in and napped or watched Euro TV news broadcasts that few understood, although most of the crew speaks French or Spanish but Italian never entered into the "need to know" equation.

When the lines finally opened, a desk for Air Madagascar was nowhere to be found. Knowing that the airline is owned by South African Airways, an attendant was asked where we should check in. She stared blankly. "Antanana-huh?" she said, looking at my ticket. Then, finally, after consulting two other people, she sent us down to the opposite



end of the terminal – far, far away. And of course, when we got there, they told us to go back.

"We don't do that down here," a man said in extremely rapid Italian, "You need to be with South African." Oh grief! Isn't that the airline that uses trans-

gender flight attendants? After this went on like a ping-pong match for about 20 minutes, Sean Richards yelled out that he saw an Air Madagascar sign being displayed about a mile away.

I yelled "Thank God" and waved the men to follow him and to hold hands so they didn't get separated. At Air Madagascar I spoke to the attendant, who, when facing me reeked strongly of booze. Great, now what! The boozier looked up and nodded to his left saying that we could check in with the business class attendant right here because he didn't know where the other workers were.

We did that and it was a good thing, because we were handed boarding passes. A woman behind the counter volunteered in superb French, "They will board you at such and such time, but listen for announcements because we don't know where the plane is." Huh? How in hell can you not know where the plane is? I immediately got visions of Kathleen Turner in Romancing the Stone boarding a bus filled with chickens and pigs, careening into a darkness from which she would return scarred, yet stronger.

With this finally resolved, boarding passes in hand, we went as a group to the Ivato departure gate. The flight switched gates twice, neither of which was announced. We'd just look up and see that the staff was packing up and relocating - nothing for us to do but follow.

Out of nowhere this beautiful twin-engine, wide body plane quietly pulled up to the gate, and we

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were motioned to go aboard. The plane was exactly like the Lufthansa plane, unless you want to include a foul-mouthed American woman who began throwing a tantrum because she had not only waited long enough but had been seated in the back row. "Can you believe it? Oh for God's sake, I hate the back row! Why'd he put us here," she was screeching expletives at the flight attendant.

It went on for some time, reinforcing why everyone hates the spoiled, entitled Americans. Her husband/wet noodle just stood there like a fixture and nodded as she continued her attack on the world because of the hand she'd been dealt. With any luck at all we would survive her tirade and would not be seated anywhere in her vicinity.

Poor Dobbs was seated next to a charming fellow from Zambia who wanted to talk about Sarah Palin, of all people, and he wondered why Americans are so stupid, after stressing that Dobbs wasn't "like most of them." Gees, we had to get our leader man away from this snobby Oxford-educated misbegotten, and get him seated with our crew.

"I can't help you out there," Dobbs told him politely, as I quietly explained to the flight attendant that we needed to be seated amongst our own kind. She smiled sweetly as if understanding our plight and pointed to an empty beside the two guys from Chicago University. A big sigh of relief, Dobbs said we did the right thing and he was as happy as all get out.

Finally we were rolling along on a runway that must have had a beginning near Lake Albano. The thing sharply made a U-turn and sped off like Batman leaving his cave. Lifting off the ground the A733 began a very steep climb, and climbed, and climbed. Unbuckle, if you wish, move around, the in-flight movie will be blah, blah, blah -- and by the



way, your oxygen mask is just over your head. Our flight time will be 9 hours 15 minutes.

It made the flight a little less taxing knowing that in a few hours we would be in Africa (or rather somewhere over the Indian Ocean) to later do something that was quite possibly going to change a few lives forever. I sat back and recalled some lines written by Hemingway, "I know that I must do what's right,

sure as Kilimanjaro rises like Olympus above the Serengeti" and anticipated breathing the clean, fresh, beautiful air as soon as we landed in Madagascar. That should be in the neighborhood of 4:30 - 5:00 PM Madagascar time.

Food, a movie, some conversation and blessed sleep came to all of us. The PA announced that the craft was making its final approach to Antananarivo Ivato Airport. It appeared that a lot of souls needed to void at the same time as the lines began to form toward the rear. I said to my seat mate that this is no time to be modest, we're gonna take that lavatory in pairs and get out of the way twice as fast.

I looked out the window but saw nothing. Apparently, it was cloudy. Then I noticed the smell – that smell you get on your clothes after you've been camping; smoke, foul, filthy smoke. I couldn't see anything because the air was thick with it, suffocating, as it had been filtered and re-filtered many times over. Some of the expedition crew appeared scared, apprehensive, like little rabbits that set teeth to grinding and tails to shaking.

We had a very smooth landing and quickly disembarked. The air was still filthy and my nostrils immediately slammed shut. I felt a blood pressure headache (to which I am not accustomed). It was mid-afternoon by somebody's time and I could barely see the airport from the plane - just a few yards away. The pervasive smell of burning immedi-

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Madagascar Expedition: Our Hilarious First Day Experience

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ately removed all pleasant thoughts from my head – I pictured the rain forests all around us being slashed and burned in order to plant another rice paddy. My young son was extremely nervous and intimidated, so he reached for my hand, holding tight.

Dobbs told us that our sponsors had thought ahead and gotten our visas certified in advance, so getting through customs would be a snap. All we need do is surrender our entry card and get a new one to be completed when we leave the country. We got to the VIP section and were told “the computers are slow,” but behind the desk, the one officer at work was pecking at a keyboard as if it were the first time he’d seen one – one key... stare... next key. I imagined we would be there for hours.

Then, that snotty American woman who had thrown the tantrum in Rome decided to take matters into her own hands, and gathering all her trappings had somehow wrestled her way into our area. She began pounding on the counter, making a terrible display remindful of the upper Atlantic coast and speaking in tones that these folks didn’t understand. She began shouting at the harried worker, making yet another good impression for Americans the world over.

The woman had managed to cut through security but her luck didn’t hold this time. A constable arrived and escorted her out of the room. We don’t know what was said but some finger shaking ensued and the constable pointed toward the airplane. The woman shut her venomous hole and disappeared. We passed through smoothly after that, collected our bags and headed toward the currency exchange counter.

Each man in our group would change \$200 for Malagasy Ariary (written MGA). We had been told that our credit cards wouldn’t work in this country,



which turned out to be untrue. We could use our credit cards at the ATM as the Banky Foiben'i Madagasikara (Central Bank of France) and the National Bank of Madagascar had caught up with the world and were pleased to accept Visa, MasterCard, and American Express. Those of you traveling to Madagascar must not despair as your cards will work.

We were also told to change our money at the airport bank upon leaving the country since the MGA

is not a convertible currency. So, hoping to do the right thing I gave the man my dollars and he handed me a stack of money (680,000 MGA to be exact) that would require a small satchel to carry. I threw the money in my bag and locked it, before turning to see a swarm of skycap and taxi drivers hurtling toward us in an attempt to get our business.

It is a frightening thing to be greeted by a mass of entrepreneurs offering assistance with your luggage to the waiting taxis, in return for an ungodly gratuity, and offering enticement for services not mentioned in the brochure. This may be helpful to some, but we found the presence of the "Skycaps a la Tana" a little distracting and worrisome. Dobbs kept telling us to be brave as we pushed through to a tall fellow holding a sign with his name on it. Gratefully we lined up behind him and marched forward.

“Welcome to Madagascar,” he said – apparently the only English he knew. A reply in French seemed to put his mind at ease. We loaded our gear into his fleet of SUVs and were off to the capital city of Antananarivo. The afternoon sun was bright red through the haze of filth and smoke that hung death-like in the air. Lord, please help us for we are weary; every bone in every body is broken.

To say that we were in culture shock is a deep understatement. I had never seen anything like this, not even in photographs, and I doubt my description of it

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will do justice. Wooden shacks lined the streets through which we sped haphazardly, dodging chickens, children, cows, and dogs. There was no alternative but to breathe and do it as little as possible.

Apparently there was no electricity out here, so fires burned openly in the street or, even more frighteningly, in “lanterns” made of 2-liter soda bottles that had been cut in half with a lit candle inside. Kiosks sold huge chunks of meat that was hanging in the open and covered in flies. Sausages, pig heads, halves of butchered animals – all just out there, exposed. “Hotelys (rated budget rooms)” offered a variety of services that held no interest at the moment.

The streets were packed to overflowing; people walking in what appeared to be a random shuffle, though I assume they must have been going somewhere. Women balanced huge baskets on their heads while the men scurried about hawking everything from buggy rides to bottled water.

The buildings behind the wooden shacks were all burnt out, wooden shutters covering whatever lay within. The edges of the windows were black from smoke exiting. I wanted to take pictures, but something held me back – I couldn’t possibly sit behind the wheel of this reasonably plush vehicle snapping photos of total poverty. Dobbs saw my predicament and motioned for me to put the camera away. We shared the unspoken words that taking pictures of this squalor might be seen as exploiting the people. It mattered not what conditions were in the USA, we can witness that nothing in the poorest of neighborhoods had ever had it this bad.

We passed through this shanty town onto a road that split fields of rice paddies. The banks on both sides were covered with clothes that were drying, and people in the rice puddles washing themselves while cows commingled freely with the people, as



did chickens and dogs and cats.

All the while, my head felt as if it were going to explode. The fumes and smoke that shot out of cars’ exhaust pipes created a noxious, thick stench that got worse each time a car accelerated. My heart sank when I saw a black cloud puff out of a tailpipe sending noxious fumes sky-

ward. Dobbs reached for his case and pulled out a few surgical masks that he passed around, fixing one over the mouth and nose of the two boys, who were sitting between us in the lead vehicle.

We finally reached the Hotel Calet des Roses, which was on the same street as the American Embassy. We had to pass a bomb checkpoint to get to the hotel. You know that something in your country sucks when the Embassy in Madagascar is in danger of being bombed.

Nevertheless, we checked in without hassle and went to assigned rooms, which turned out to be absolutely delightful and civilized. The bathrooms had bidets (I’ve never understood these things). I wonder why the French, if so hyper about being clean, don’t start with their armpits and move on to their butts once they’ve figured out the top part.

Welcome to Madagascar. Welcome to the capital city. We know that it’s got to get better than this just as soon as we find our element in the rainforest.

Illustrations from Wikipedia at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Seal_of_Madagascar.svg>.

The ECHS *Journal* Section

Possible New Evidence about Amelia Earhart Disappearance

By Jerry Simmons

Amelia Mary Earhart, an American aviation pioneer and author, disappeared July 2, 1937 in an attempt to make a circumnavigational flight of the globe. There is a fascination with her life and her disappearance to this day, after over 75 years. I have to admit I am certainly fascinated in one particular theory of her disappearance.

Many believe she ran out of fuel and that Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan ditched at sea, the most widely accepted explanation. If this theory is true, the plane rests on the floor of the Pacific Ocean, over 5 miles down.

In the quest for finding out just what happened, there's an organization directing its resources and attention to using modern technology. Wikipedia states, "Between July 12 and 24, 2012 an underwater expedition was conducted by The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR) near Nikumaroro Island in the Republic of Kiribati, using sonar mapping.

On August 18 the group revealed their reports and findings which included pictures of a possible wreck-age site on the uninhabited coral atoll. Ric Gillespie, executive director of TIGHAR, suggested that most of the plane's parts would have disintegrated after 75



The label reads, "Gardiner Is. And the Wreck." The Object to the left with the red box around it appears to be part of a plane's landing gear.

years, due to the severe underwater environment at Nikumaroro. The group plans to retrieve some of the debris from the underwater field in [2014]."

Gillespie's theory is that Earhart spotted the island, then called Gardner Island, and noted it had a wide reef on which she landed her Electra. In several places the reef at Gardner Island dries at low tide and is flat and smooth

enough to land an airplane.

The broad reef was far enough above the water at



Amelia and the plane which she was using in the attempt to fly around the world. The plane is a Lockheed Electra 10E.

low tide that she was able to run her starboard engine to keep the batteries charged and proceeded to broadcast distress calls. Because of the peculiarity of radio sets and atmospheric conditions her broadcasts were heard by many people around the Pacific and in the U.S. Most reports, however, were dismissed as hoaxes and given no credence.

Of six bearings taken by Pan American Airways Radio Direction Finding stations on Oahu, Midway, and Wake Island, the

four strongest cross near

Gardner Island. A seventh bearing taken by the Coast Guard also passes near Gardner. After Gillespie and his organization spent some 20-odd years researching the reports, they found one that was especially

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Possible New Evidence about Amelia Earhart Disappearance

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intriguing, that of a 15-year old girl (at the time) living in St. Petersburg, Florida. Betty Klenck often listened to her family's shortwave radio and for several hours she listened to a weak signal that faded in and out.

The desperate-sounding voice stated it was Amelia Earhart and she was calling for help. Betty made notes on what she heard in the space of three or so hours, so based on the contents of the notes, and knowing what we know now, it almost certainly was Earhart. Betty kept her notebook and, over the years, occasionally tried to get someone to pay attention to her claims of having heard Amelia Earhart, to no avail.

For a complete description of the notebook and the transcriptions see Betty's Notebook" on the TIGHAR website at <<http://www.tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Documents/Notebook/notebook.html>>.

It seems as though there was a man with her (Fred Noonan) who was severely injured and at times talking out of his head. At times he would try to get the microphone from Amelia and she struggled with him. They had to get out of the plane as the tide came in and the heat was unbearable both inside the plane and outside. The timing of the radio signals coincided with the times of the low tides in that area

of the Pacific in July 1937. The reports only lasted for about three or four days, and it's believed the plane may have been washed off the reef by then. The aircraft could have been washed seaward and become hung up in the surf zone at the reef's edge. A photo of the area taken by a British expedition



Amelia and Fred Noonan

three months later shows an unidentified object on the edge of the reef which could be part of the plane's landing gear. Later residents of the island told of aircraft wreckage in that location.

TIGHAR'S theory is that Earhart and Noonan lived for a time as castaways on the waterless atoll, relying on rain squalls for drinking water. They caught and cooked small fish, seabirds, turtles and clams. Amelia died at a makeshift campsite on the island's southeast end. Noonan's fate is unknown.

An underwater search with remote control and automatic submersibles was conducted last summer (2012) by TIGHAR at the island but due to technical difficulties the team wasn't able to perform all the exercises they'd planned. Post examination of the high definition video that was taken did, however, reveal some interesting scenes that will get a second look when they return in 2014.

For a pretty comprehensive look at the history of TIGHAR's projects, including the search attempting to settle the Earhart mystery once and for all, you should visit www.tighar.com. To see an outline of the project with links to details on the various aspects of past searches, go to http://tighar.org/wiki/Earhart_Project#Background_Information.

One of the pictures accompanying this article shows an unidentified object in the circle at the left that closer examination hints it could be part of the landing gear from Earhart's plane. The photo was taken about three months after her disappearance. The ship, the "Norwich City," at the right is an old wreck that was there since about 1929.

Let's hope that 2014 brings the solving of this mystery.€

ECHOES
THE NEWSLETTER FOR
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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