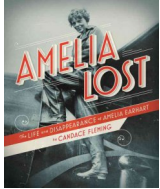


Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart



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I thought I knew most of what there was to know about Amelia Earhart and her doomed final flight, but this well-researched account, Amelia Lost by Candace Fleming, is both surprising and fascinating! Starting with a haunting account of the coast guard cutter *Itasca's* fruitless wait for Earhart to land on tiny Howland Island the morning of July 2, 1937, this book is hard to put down. Earhart's early childhood was a happy one, but by the time she was in high school, her father had descended into alcoholism, sending the family into poverty and shame. Fleming implies that Earhart's desperate wish to fly was at least partly a result of a need to free herself from the unpleasant realities of everyday life.

Having assumed Earhart was perhaps the only American female pilot of her day, I was interested to learn there were several others, some of whom probably had better flying skills than Earhart. Her ardent desire to be a "vagabond in the air" appears sometimes to have exceeded her willingness to undertake extensive training. Accordingly, some more skillful and experienced pilots were alarmed by Earhart's flights, especially when she flew types of aircraft for which she wasn't fully trained. When she met her future husband, promoter and publisher George Putnam, he was already married, but that didn't stop them from becoming a couple who worked tirelessly to fund and promote their flying schemes. The various stories surrounding Earhart, including ones she told about herself, appear to have been sometimes based in truth, sometimes not. Regardless of the veracity of some of the stories, Eleanor Roosevelt (who became a friend) and thousands of other Americans were thrilled and inspired by Earhart's daring feats and carefully cultivated image. Another surprise for me was that at least three civilians (two of whom were teens) reported hearing some of Earhart's last radio transmissions, including some not picked up by government and military sources. Their stories are dramatically told, and at least one lived with lifelong regret that she was unable to help Earhart in what were possibly the last hours of her life. For more information on current efforts to solve the mystery of what happened to Amelia Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan on their last flight, Fleming recommends visiting the website for The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, at tighar.org.

Highly recommended for grades 4 and up.

(Posted by Ellen.)

Posted by Ellen A. on May 13, 2011

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