

The stories of those who lost their lives performing the IAGS mission – 1948 to 1979



The Inter American Geodetic Survey or IAGS had a rich history of supporting mapping, geodetic and international cooperation missions that are now part of the NGA mission. Formed as a US Army organization in 1946, the organization was focused on training and equipping the geodetic and mapping elements of governments in Central and South America as well as Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It was incorporated into the Defense Mapping Agency in 1972. Eventually the IAGS missions were either completed, discontinued or merged with similar missions within DMA.

Aviation support, a major part of the mission, was provided from 1952 by the 537th Survey Engineer Aviation Liaison Detachment, which had Bell H-13 Helicopters, and Cessna L-10 fixed wing aircraft. In 1953 the 537th became the 937th and was outfitted with H-19 and H-23 helicopters, L-20 Beavers, L-23 Seminoles and the U-1A Otter. This aviation group was disbanded in 1967 having completed their mission. Air operations were continued until 1970 as the IAGS Aviation Element. Aerial photography was provided by the U.S Air Forces' 1370th Photomapping wing, who used B-50 and C-130 aircraft.

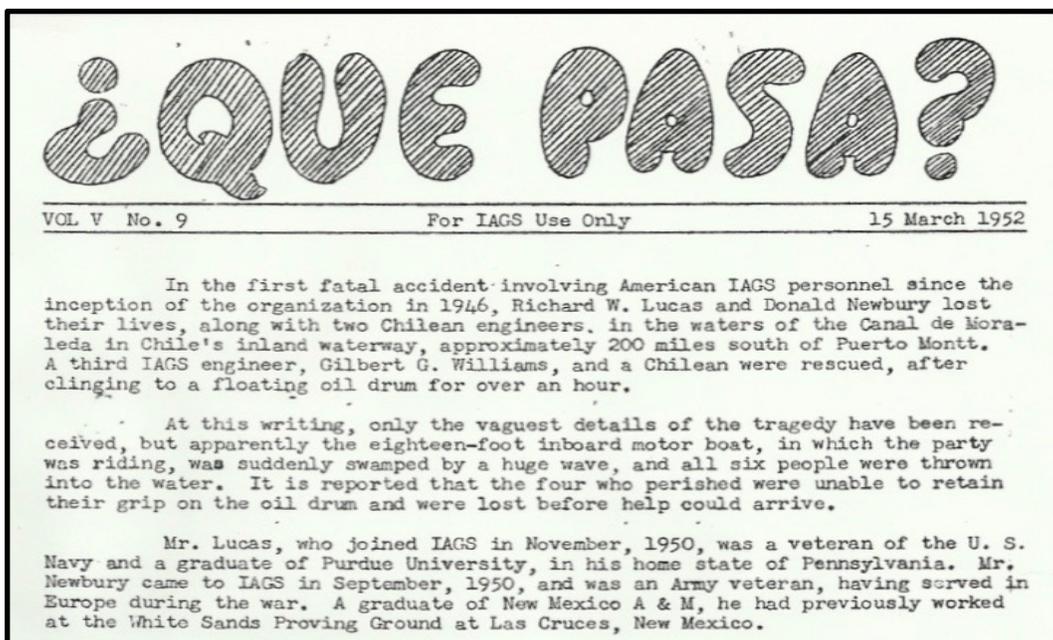
Part of the IAGS story, which has faded from the NGA corporate memory, is the fact that the IAGS mission was a dangerous one. In fact, this report highlights 31 individuals who lost their lives supporting the IAGS mission. In addition to these men, an unknown number of Latin American partners also lost their lives.

Two Alumni Associations (NGAA and AMS) are helping re-discover the long forgotten stories of mission-related accidents that cost the lives of IAGS staff. What follows is a summary of what has been documented to date. We are circulating these stories in the hope that others will recall something that will add to our understanding of what happened.

For the purposes of this research and report, US personnel supporting the IAGS missions were included. Other reporting identified some staff who lost their lives due to illness and non-duty related accidents. These accounts have not been included.

CHILE

In 1952, Mr. Richard W. Lucas and Mr. Donald Newbury are believed to be the first IAGS employees to lose their lives supporting the IAGS mission. They, as well as two Chilean engineers, drowned when their boat capsized in Chilean waters shown on the map to the right. A short report on 15 March 1952 in the IAGS newsletter, known as Que Pasa documented the accident. Additional documentation was provided in an interview with Mr. Wayne Miller, a long time IAGS employee living in San Antonio, where he revealed that the US also set up a trust fund for a son of one of the Chileans who perished. Mr. Miller reported that he was dispatched, under authorities from the US State Department, to work with a local bank and the family to establish the account. The inset below is the original Que Pasa report on the accident.



In 1979 another US citizen believed to be an IAGS employee, Mr. Raymond Johns lost his life in Chile. Mr. Johns' name is on the Chilean monument shown below. Mr. Miller recalled that Mr. Johns died in a helicopter accident in Tierra del Fuego. In an email on 25 September 2016, Mr Steve Conner, the son of MAJ Richard Conner (see PERU below) also noted that Ray Johns lost his life in a helicopter accident on 22 February 1979. He also noted that Mr. Johns may not have been with IAGS at the time, which might explain why I've found no 1979 era DMA personnel who recall the accident.

All three employees were supporting the Chilean mapping missions and have been memorialized by the Instituto Geográfico Militar (IGM) with the monument in Santiago shown here.



BOLIVIA

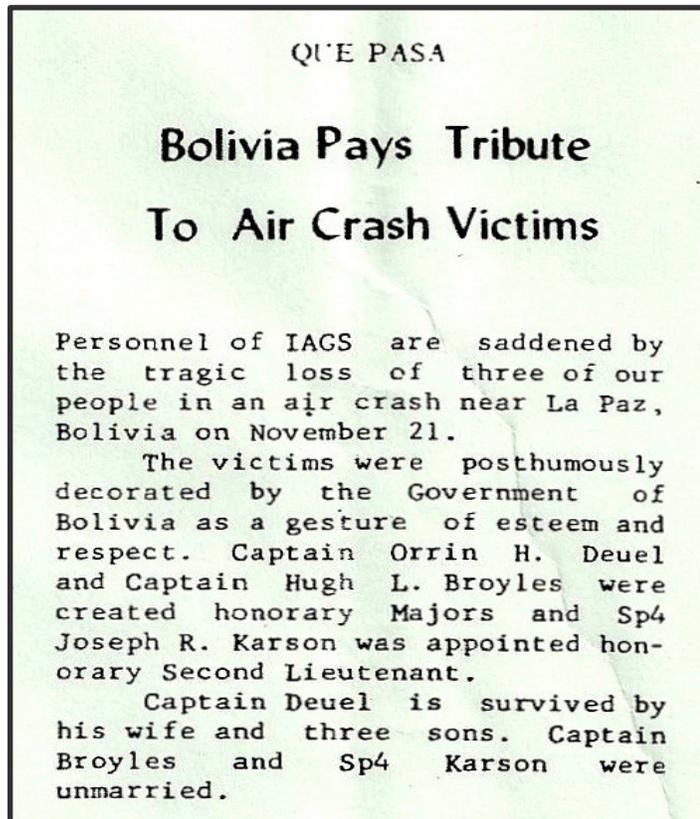
On **November 21, 1960** Que Pasa (shown below) reported the "...tragic loss of three of our own..." when Captain Orrin H Deuel, Captain Hugh L. Broyles and Sp4 Joseph R. Karson lost their lives in an air crash near La Paz, Bolivia. Mr. Connor also reported on this accident and that the "...plane caught fire and crashed near Viacha shortly after takeoff during a maintenance test flight." CPT Broyles was reported to be the Chief of the Geodetic Survey in Bolivia.

Mr Connor also reported that MAJ Charles M. Crowe and Mr. Richard N. Hayward lost their lives on **4 October 1968** in an aircraft crash 320 miles east of La Paz while on a supply mission. In a supporting statement, Mr. Miller recalled that a Mr. Dick Hayward died in a small reconnaissance plane crash in Bolivia. He didn't recall a date, although thought it was likely in the late 50s or 60s.

PERU

In a report from Mr. Connor, MAJ Richard F. Connor (his father) and SGT David D. Johnston lost their lives on **20 August, 1964** near the Rioja region of

Northeast Peru. It was noted in the report that the US Embassy had requested support from IAGS to locate a missing Peruvian Air Force Allouette. The aircraft, piloted by MAJ Connor crashed into a jungle covered hill "...when the left wing tip contacted the dry limb of a large tree." In a call, Mr Vern Perdue, another former IAGS employee, recalled being assigned to Peru when a fatal accident occurred, probably in 1964-67 where two were killed, the pilot, Major Richard Connor and crew chief SGT David Johnston.



ECUADOR

Mr. Perdue also recalled remains being recovered in Ecuador. Mr. Connor reported that a Mr. Bud Rogers perished in Ecuador in **December 1958**. It is unknown at this point if these two reports are related.

VENEZUELA

In **August 1948**, T-Sergeant Joseph B. Wegener, a pilot, was killed in Venezuela and identified in Que Pasa as the first IAGS fatality. Que Pasa later identified the Chilean drownings as the first IAGS fatality. No further information has been discovered.

On **11 April 1969**, MAJ Larry Frank, LTC Miles W. Bowen, and Mr. Harold D. (Dunc) Moir were killed when their aircraft crashed shortly after takeoff from Caracas, according to email from Mr. Steve Connor. In an email on 19 Sep 16, Mr. Charles Whalen recalled that he and Dunc Moir “went through the IAGS geodetic survey school together the spring of 1953. I later visited him on the Peru project. He died in an airplane crash. It may have been in a de Havilland Otter. I think they were hauling steel to build a tower. It may have been in Venezuela.” In a follow up with Mr. Perdue, he recalled that Harold “Dunc” Moir died in the crash of a reconnaissance plane in Venezuela and that two others may also have perished in this accident.

Mr. Connor also reported that a Castle Ferris died in Venezuela in **1968**.

GUATEMALA

On **February 1, 1950**, five personnel lost their lives when their US Air Attaché C-47 crashed in Guatemala on an IAGS mission. No names were mentioned in the Que Pasa report.

COSTA RICA

On **August 17, 1950**, another C-47 crashed in Costa Rica while on an IAGS supply mission. All 5 crewmen were killed according to a brief posting in Que Pasa.

Also in the report from Mr. Connor was an aircraft crash on **March 10, 1955** where CPT Kenneth M. Funchess and Cpl J.B. Carpente perished. The plane “crashed while returning to Fort Kobbe from San Jose.”

Mr. Connor also reported that in **March 1976**, Tom Smith and Roscoe Cleveland lost their lives in a twin engine Cessna crash in Costa Rica. There were reports in Que Pasa of a Costa Rica accident in a pleasure aircraft. More research is needed on this accident to determine if this was a work related accident or not.

Global Support - IRAN

In the course of this research there have been stories of IAGS staff supporting missions elsewhere in the world. Much more research is needed. During a conversation with Mr. Perdue, he recalled that there had been other casualties. Mr. Connor did as well. Mr. Perdue believed that Mr. Dan Knotts, an IAGS pilot, was on assignment to support mapping in Iran. He survived the crash of his Otter in the Iranian mountains, but later died trying to get out of the mountains. Mr. Perdue recalled that Mr. Knotts tried to slide down a mountain in a sleeping bag.

In Summary

The table below provides a summary of the findings to date. At this point references have been found indicating 31 personnel lost their lives in support of the IAGS missions. It’s important to note that personnel and service records have not yet been researched. That said, many of the names listed below are supported by multiple references. While additional research is needed, it is certain that personnel lost their lives in support of the IAGS missions.

<p>BOLIVIA</p> <p>CPT Orrin H. Duel (1960) CPT Hugh L. Broyles (1960) Sp4 Joseph R. <u>Karson</u> (1960) MAJ Charles M. Crowe (1968) Mr. Richard (Dick) Hayward (1968)</p> <p>CHILE</p> <p>Mr. Richard W. Lucas (1952) Mr. Donald Newbury (1952) Mr. Raymond Johns (1979)</p> <p>COSTA RICA</p> <p>5 Unknown US personnel (Aug 1950) CPT Kenneth M. <u>Funchess</u> (1955) Cpl J. B. <u>Carpente</u> (1955) Mr. Tom Smith (1976) Mr. Roscoe Cleveland (1976)</p>	<p>EQUADOR</p> <p>Mr. Bud Rogers (1958)</p> <p>GUATAMALA</p> <p>5 Unknown US Air <u>Attache</u> personnel (Feb 1950)</p> <p>PERU</p> <p>MAJ Richard F. Connor (1964) SGT David D. Johnston (1964)</p> <p>VENEUELA</p> <p>T-Sargent Joseph B. Wegener (1948) MAJ Larry Frank (1969) LTC Miles W. Bowen (1969) Mr. Harold (<u>Dunc</u>) <u>Moir</u> (1969) Mr. Castle Ferris (1968)</p> <p>IRAN</p> <p>Mr. Dan <u>Knotts</u> (Spelling & date unknown)</p>
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IAGS was a major factor in mapping South and Central America and has not received proper credit for its role.

In addition to the fatal accidents, there are many mentions of humanitarian aid rendered by IAGS personnel in the Que Pasa newsletter. Disease, snakes, hostile Indians and extreme terrain defined the “office” of IAGS field personnel.

The size of the effort is also largely forgotten. One 1964 report stated that there were 640 US personnel assigned to IAGS and another 4,000+ foreign supporting partners.



The IAGS mission was called “the largest mapping enterprise ever undertaken” in a TV show about IAGS. ***Big Picture: Mapping Adventure*** aired on February 28, 1964, and provides a close up view of the IAGS mission and work environment. Readers can view this on youtube

at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTY65o3Mm2w>

or simply Google 'IAGS Big Picture'.

In addition to Mr. Wayne Miller, Mr. Vernon Perdue, Mr. Chuck Whalen and Mr Steve Connor; Mr. Chuck Geisewite, Mr. J.P. Roa, Mr. Liam O'Brien, Mr. Ange Meoli, Mr. John Tomasovich, Mr. Ed O'Bloy, Mr. Charles Smith and Mr. Irv Buck have contributed to this research for this report.

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