

SAMANIEGO PLANE CRASH

Two men were killed when their F100F jet fighter aircraft crashed into the snow covered, cloud-shrouded Samaniego Peak about 0900 on a Wednesday morning, 12 March 1975. Killed were Captain Jackson F. Hurst, age 33, instructor with the Arizona Air National Guard and 2nd Lt. Richard T. Ortenblad, age 26, from the South Dakota Air National Guard. Lt. Ortenblad was in Tucson receiving flight training.

The plane hit the mountain just below the 6000-foot peak and disintegrated upon impact. Debris from the aircraft was spread over a one square mile area. There was no indication of trouble before contact with the aircraft by radar and radio was lost. However, the National Weather Service said that at the time of the crash, low clouds and snow showers obscured the mountains around Tucson. The wreckage was found about 45 minutes later by a helicopter sent out to look for the plane when contact was lost.



Samaniego Peak

Paul McGee of McGee Ranch witnessed the crash according to the Green Valley News. He heard the jet overhead when it was flying at a particularly low altitude and saw it fly into the cloud cover surrounding the peak. Then he heard the crash. He notified Davis-Monthan Air Force Base before going to the scene where he found the wreckage about 150 feet below the summit.

The Air Force removed the major pieces of wreckage but for several years there were numerous small bits of metal scattered about the peak. Over the years many of these disappeared as souvenirs. Now there is very little evidence that a plane crash had occurred. During a trip to the peak in October 2014, many of the surviving pieces had been gathered into a few small piles.



Plane Crash Remnants – October 2014



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The Green Valley Hiking Club prepared a brass plate memorializing the incident and mounted it at the crash site. In January 1998, the club conducted a hike to the scene to remount the plate since it had been reported that the mounting post had been knocked over. Upon arrival at the scene, it was discovered that someone had “appropriated” the brass plate. All that remained were remnants of the post with holes where the plate had been mounted.

Summary prepared by Lillian Monson and updated by T. Johnson. Photographs by T. Johnson

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