

**Alexander von Humboldt Conference 2001
Humboldt State University
Arcata, California**

The Truth about Jimmie Angel and Angel Falls

by Karen Angel

The truth about Jimmie Angel's life is convoluted and distorted by legend for good reason. A major factor in the difficulty of finding the truth about him is that he actively participated in the creation of the various legends about his colorful life. This paper is only a small part of a much greater research project to discover the truth about Jimmie Angel.¹

Even though I have the benefit of being a member of the Angel Family, I have had to piece together the truth about him through archival research and interviews with people who knew him. Although my pool of informants is rapidly declining with the passage of time, I have had the opportunity to interview and to correspond with a number of men and women in the United States and Venezuela who knew him or his associates.

There are many unsubstantiated stories about Jimmie Angel that are reported in the books and articles of writers and journalists. In part this is because the stories are quite exciting and make for good reading. I have often found that writers, who consult with me, when told that a particular story is not true, or has not been verified, will repeat the mythology because in adventure writer Ted Hatfield's words, "It makes for a better story."²

John Random, a writer in London, England that I have worked with since 1996, decided to switch from a biography to a novel after

**2021 – Revised by Karen Angel.
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struggling for months with the Jimmie Angel material.³ Random has been exceptionally helpful with my research and we have shared information over the last several years. Although he is now writing a novel about Jimmie Angel, he is still trying to discover the truth about the man.

That Jimmie taught himself to fly at age 14 is part of the legend. The stories that he was a Royal British Flying Corps Ace in World War I, created an airforce for a Chinese Warlord in the Gobi Desert, or worked as an aviation scout for Lawrence Arabia have not been verified.⁴ What is true is that Jimmie Angel was a gifted pilot and loved Central and South America, especially Venezuela.

He was born in the mid-west state of Missouri on 1 August 1899. His full name was James Crawford Angel. Although a citizen, he spent much of his 57 years of life outside of the United States. He was 5 feet, 8 inches tall and had a dark, ruddy complexion, black hair, and brown eyes. While in his 20's, his face was burned and permanently scarred when the wiring in the flight panel of an airplane that he was piloting caught on fire.⁵ He often told people that he was mostly an American Indian, which was only partially true. His mother Margaret Belle Marshall Angel, born in Arkansas, was part Cherokee.

Following service in World War I, he worked as an independent contract pilot until his death in 1956. He considered the life of a commercial airline pilot too routine, too structured. "It would be like driving a bus," he responded to his youngest son Rolan when asked late in his life why he did not have an airline pilot's job.⁶

Jimmie Angel is frequently referred to as a soldier of fortune. He was much more. A talented aviator, his explorations in the 1930's of the Gran Sabana of southeastern Venezuela developed greater interest in the region. Working for the Venezuelan Ministry of Development in association with the American Museum of Natural History, and the Venezuelan-Brazil Boundary Commission the vast Gran Sabana was explored, mapped, and opened to systematic scientific evaluation.

Partly, because of these activities, Venezuela's vast Canaima National Park has been preserved and saved from the deprecations that have destroyed so many other regions in South America.

[Note 2021: Canaima National Park is now under assault due to aggressive gold mining permitted by the Venezuelan government.]

According to legend, his first trip to Venezuela was in 1921 with an American mining geologist known as McCracken. The two had met in a bar in Panama and had agreed that McCracken would pay Jimmie \$5,000 to fly him to a location in southeastern Venezuela. They landed on a mysterious tabletop mountain and removed many pounds of gold from a river on the plateau. McCracken later died in the United States and Jimmie spent the balance of his life looking for the river of gold.

Documents or informants have not verified the legend of the river of gold. The first-person account by Jimmie Angel can not be verified. Certainly, Angel told the story frequently. Many of his friends and family members including his youngest brother who is my deceased father believed the story.⁷ Whether it actually happened is unknown. We do know that the story was quite a successful means of attracting investors to his search for gold. It was a quest that lasted for the balance of his life.

Angel was obsessed with Auyan-tepui; a 435 square mile heart shaped table mountain in the southeastern Gran Sabana region of Venezuela. Auyan means devil and tepui means house in the language of the indigenous Pemon people, hence the Devil's House.⁸ Angel believed that it was the home of McCracken's river of gold.

The canyon in which Angel Falls is located is referred to as Devil's Canyon or Churun Canyon. The Churun River originates on Auyan-tepui. The primary waters of the Churun flow over the canyon's walls at a different point than Angel Falls and are called Churun Meru. Meru means waterfall in the Pemon language.⁹

Angel was working as an aviator guide in the Gran Sabana for the Santa Ana Mining Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma in the fall of 1933.

His expedition companions were mining official D. H. Curry¹⁰ and co-pilot and mechanic Jose Cardona from Mexico. On November 16, 1933, while on a solo flight, Angel flew into Devil's Canyon and saw for first time what was to become known to the world as Angel Falls.¹¹ Due to ceaseless heavy rains, Curry and Cardona left shortly after Angel saw it and refused to believe his story about a "mile high waterfall."

In 1934, Jimmie met his second wife, Marie Sanders¹² in Los Angeles. Like his first wife Virginia Martin,¹³ Marie was a tough and independent woman. Both were slender and beautiful with red hair – physical attributes that Jimmie thought helped their expeditions in some rather difficult situations. Marie was his companion and sometimes co-pilot and navigator, from 1935 until their first child was born in Nicaragua in 1943.¹⁴

Angel met Durand A. Hall and L. R. Dennison in 1934 in New York City. He agreed to be the pilot and guide for an exploratory Gran Sabana expedition sponsored by mining group Case, Pomeroy, and Company. Hall and Dennison became the first individuals to verify Angel's waterfall when he flew them into Devil's Canyon on 24 March 1935. Angel had been telling people for many months about his waterfall, but his story had not been believed because the maps for the region did not show Auyan-tepui or any feature as high. Dennison told about his adventures with Jimmie Angel in a book titled Devil's Mountain.¹⁵

At a later date, Angel's friend F. I. "Shorty" Martin, an American petroleum geologist, took photographs of the waterfall to verify its existence.¹⁶

Between 1935 and 1937 Jimmie and Marie Angel made several trips between Venezuela and the United States. During this period, they acquired his Flamingo¹⁷ airplane which he named "*El Rio Caroni*" after the south to north flowing Caroni River which he used as his primary Gran Sabana visual navigational guide.

Jimmie and Marie Angel's close friend was Venezuelan explorer Gustavo "Gubuya" Heny. Heny was born into a wealthy Venezuelan family of German descent. He was a civil engineer and an expert outdoorsman and mountaineer. Carmen Dearden, niece of Heny describing him said, "My uncle was quite special. He had a wonderful ability of freedom. He had the quality of a kind of magical bird that would fly in and fly out. He would take off for months at a time into the jungle with only a shotgun and a bag of salt."¹⁸

It is difficult to know when any geological feature is actually discovered. Perhaps they are never discovered. Rather, the knowledge of their existence gains recognition by a larger, more diverse audience. One thing is certain, the existence of Angel Falls was recognized by the world and thus it was "discovered" because of Jimmie Angel's explorations.

Perhaps Angel Falls was known to the indigenous people of the region for thousands of years, but due to its location on the House of the Devil, the area was avoided. Perhaps the grand plume of water had been reported in the journals of one or two early explorers. British author Charles Nicholl reports, "...I unrolled Raleigh's chart at the British Museum, and made a few calculations, and discovered that Sir Walter Raleigh's "golden city" and Jimmy Angel's "river of gold" were one and the same place."¹⁹

Heny's friend Enrique Lucca explained to me that "The name Angel Falls came about during a Caracas reunion in 1937 of Angel, Shorty Martin and Heny. They were talking about the waterfall and when Martin and Angel didn't have a name for it, Heny suggested the name Angel Falls, using Jimmie's last name because it was he who had made it known to the world."²⁰ It is very unlikely that the waterfall's name would have withstood the test of time if Jimmie's last name had been Smith. Angel Falls is a lyrically descriptive name for the giant cascading wing of water that flows from Auyan-tepui.

Jimmie Angel and Angel Falls became much better known as the result of his October 9, 1937 landing of El Rio Caroni on Auyan-tepui in search of the lost river of gold. Jimmie and Marie's expedition companions were Gustavo Heny, Heny's gardener and jungle companion Miguel Angel Delgado, and botanist Captain Felix Cardona Puig.²¹ Angel had scouted a landing spot on Auyan-tepui from the air. Heny and Cardona had explored for a foot route from Angel's Camp at Guayaraca on Auyan-tepui's south flank, to the proposed landing site which was on the northern side of the plateau.

The search by Heny and Cardona for a foot route was only partially successful. Cardona returned to camp after a few days while Heny continued to pursue a northern route. He was able to establish a route across much of the plateau, but was turned back from reaching the planned landing site because of the tepui's great interior wall. Angel flew El Rio Caroni over Heny during his fifteen days of reconnaissance and dropped supplies that were attached to parachutes that had been fashioned by Heny's sister Carmen.²²

According to Lucca, "Jimmie was sure that Cabuya could lead them safely back if something happened. Cabuya trusted Jimmie's ability as a pilot so he thought that there was little danger, but he did want more time to explore the landing site Jimmie had selected on the tepui. Jimmie didn't give him the time he needed."²³

On the morning of the flight, Cardona stayed in camp to maintain radio contact with the Auyan-tepui landing party that included Jimmie and Marie Angel, Heny and Delgado who was known for his ability with rope and machete. Marie Angel writes in her unpublished manuscript that they were well prepared for possible problems. Their supplies included tents, blankets, flashlights, cameras, rope, machetes, and enough food to last a month.²⁴

At first, Angel's landing appeared to be perfect, but the wheels broke through the sod and sank into the mud bringing the airplane to an abrupt halt with a broken fuel line and the airplane's nose buried in

the mud.²⁵ Two days later, when it became clear that there was no gold to be found and that El Rio Caroni was hopelessly mired in her muddy landing spot Angel wrote the following note:

By Jimmie Angel

This Flamingo Airplane was landed here Saturday Oct 9, 1937 at 11:45 AM
the landing was intentional, switch was cut also gas.
We were on the ground 750 feet before we hit soft spot
Plane nosed up. And tore extending edge on left wing tip.
And pulled one hose connection loose on oil radiator.
No more visible damage done
passengers Mrs Angel Gustavo Heny Miguel Delgado
today is the eleventh of October
we are walking out in good Health for Comarata camp
our radio has failed us completely.²⁶

Prior to starting the long march from the mountain to the village of Kamarata in the valley below, the landing party used ropes to free the nose of El Rio Caroni from the mud because Jimmie did not want to abandon his airplane in an undignified position. Cloth was torn and taped to a wing to read "ALL OK" with an arrow showing the direction the group was heading.²⁷

Angel had expected pilots to come to their assistance, but the search was delayed due to loss of radio contact with Cardona²⁸ at Guayaraca. Dr. William H. Phelps, Sr.,^{29a} a close friend of Heny, did send airplanes to look for them, but the rescue pilots could not see through the clouds covering the mountain. After a few days, the Angel party was presumed hopelessly lost ... or dead.

As planned should the aerial part of the expedition for gold encounter trouble, Heny led the Angels and Delgado down from the Auyan-tepui plateau to their camp at Guayaraca and on to Kamarata. According to Heny's sister Carmen, "Jimmie was a great pilot, but he wasn't very good on the ground. He didn't like to walk."³⁰

Their exceptionally arduous journey from the mountain over unknown and difficult terrain took eleven days.³¹ During four days in November 1994, I climbed Auyan-tepui using Heny's trail, which remains the only trail to access the top, and crossed the plateau to the point where the Churun River rises on the tepui.³² Angel's landing spot remained a strenuous four-to-five-day trek north.

Commissioned in early 1939 by General Eleazar Lopez-Contreras, President of Venezuela, Angel was the pilot guide for an expedition of geologists, archaeologists, and engineers from the Venezuelan Ministry of Development. Their task was to survey the area around Auyan-tepui. Curator of Paleontology Dr. George Gaylord Simpson and ornithologist Dr. E. Thomas Gilliard of the American Museum of Natural History were among the expedition members.³³

According to Gilliard, it was Angel's hammering away at any skeptic with a willing ear and a bank account that caused an earlier expedition in 1937 by the American Museum of Natural History and the 1939 expedition to take place. "The fact that a great Lost World really existed, falls or no falls, was sufficient to put the zoological world on its toes. Scientists in all branches who were acquainted with the strange flora and fauna of the two other Lost Worlds (Roraima and Mt. Duida) joined in acclaiming Mr. James Angel's discoveries."³⁴

The government of Venezuela issued *Revista de Fomento* in December 1939. The large volume contains expedition reports, photographs, surveys, and maps. A full-page photograph of Angel Falls in the volume was taken from Angel's airplane. Gilliard's account of the expedition in the December 1940 issue of *Natural History, The Magazine of the American Museum of Natural History*, reports that the geologists "could hardly believe their eyes. ... These conservative scientists have recorded in the geological report that Angel Falls are in excess of 3,300 feet." Gilliard concludes, "The appropriate honor bestowed in naming the falls after Jimmy Angel³⁵ makes them a

monument to the courage and persistence of this explorer-aviator and soldier of fortune."³⁶

Jimmie and Marie Angel left Venezuela in May 1940 and spent the balance of the year and most of 1941 in the United States preparing for their return to Venezuela. Marie wrote to her brother Herbert Sanders that their December 8th flight from the Canal Zone was one of the last allowed to continue to Venezuela before World War II security considerations closed the border.³⁷ The Angels, who were actively in support of the Allied Forces, were forced to leave neutral Venezuela in 1942. Angel spent the balance of the 1940's working as a pilot.³⁸

In 1947, Angel met Ruth Robertson, an American photojournalist living in Caracas. Robertson's successful 1949 expedition measured Angel Falls. Four overland expeditions before her had tried to reach the base of the waterfall and had failed. When Robertson proposed the idea to *National Geographic*, she did not receive any encouragement or sponsorship. However, they said they would publish her article if she was successful.³⁹ Her photographs and an account of the expedition were published in *National Geographic* in November 1949.⁴⁰ Shortly after Robertson arrived back from her expedition, Angel heard the rumor that his waterfall was not a mile high. He was a bundle of indignation and wrath when he arrived at her apartment to talk with her. "I've been tellin' folks for years that my waterfall was a mile high. Now you gotta go and spoil the whole thing - I tell ya it is a mile high!" A day later, the actual measurements were available, and Robertson was relieved to tell her friend Jimmie that the waterfall "measured 3,212 feet high, with the first main drop 2,648 feet. Not a mile high, but indeed the highest in the world!"⁴¹

According to their sons Jimmy and Rolan, between 1942 and 1949 the Angels lived in the countries of Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Belize, Canal Zone, Costa Rica, British Guiana, the United States, and Venezuela briefly in 1949. Because of the chronically poor

health of their young sons, Jimmie and Marie returned to the United States and established a home in Santa Barbara, California in 1951.⁴²

Angel spent the next five years working as a pilot in Central and South America and travelling between work locations and his home in California. His marriage with Marie was in difficulty when he left the United States in 1956 for British Guiana and Venezuela with Bill Bjorklund. His father Glenn Angel stated in a letter to his niece Mae Mann that Jimmie had stayed with him most of the time during his last month in the United States and that Jimmie had been in poor health for a long time. He described his son's last journey in the following words:

So he left here on the 4th of April in a plane. He stopped at Brownsville, Texas and it was on the 17th of April that the plane crashed. ... He seemed not to be badly hurt at first. They took him to a hospital and he had a light stroke then got some better but later had another stroke and after that he became unconscious and he lay there in that condition until he passed away...

When he left my home the last time, just a day or two before he started he told me, he said 'Dad I will never be back.' So I now have come to the conclusion that he wanted to go the way he did."⁴³

Following nine months of hospitalization, Angel died on 8 December 1956 in Gorgas Hospital, U.S. military facility in Balboa, Canal Zone. His Certificate of Death, signed by Everett T. Rhoades, M.D., lists his occupation as "Explorer."⁴⁴

His cremated remains were returned to Marie Angel and entombed in 1957 in the Portal of the Folded Wings, an aviation memorial in Burbank-North Hollywood, California.⁴⁵

In July 1960 Marie and sons Jimmy and Rolan took Jimmie Angel's ashes home to Venezuela and Angel Falls. His beloved friends Gustavo Heny and Patricia Grant were there for the last flight. Heny told his sister Carmen that "When the plane came into the canyon you couldn't see anything. It was so cloudy. Then something happened. It

was so clear, so beautiful, we could see everything. It was like the mountain was receiving something from out of this world – it was Jimmie.”⁴⁶

Grant, who was Angel’s co-pilot during World War II of raw rubber cargo in Nicaragua and Honduras, wrote the following description of Jimmie Angel’s last flight:

We flew Jimmie all around the canyon, over his plane and past his beloved water Falls on this, his last earthy flight and somehow I felt he thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. What few patches of scud and mists that had clung to the crevasses suddenly cleared revealing Angel Falls in all its magnificence. (Luck of the Angel) ...

As we skimmed by the Falls the ashes floated downward whipped by the wind and mixed in spray, and thus our beloved Jimmie returned to his waterfall.

The ceremony in its simplicity was one of the greatest emotional thrills of my life. I feel he is truly happy at last. Now his spirit can roam the halls of this great canyon for all eternity. I felt awed at having had the privilege of knowing this great man and having been his friend.”⁴⁷

Jimmie Angel’s airplane El Rio Caroni remained on Auyan-tepui for 33 years. Its future was changed in 1964 when the government of Venezuela declared it a national monument.⁴⁸ In 1970, it was removed in sections by Venezuelan Air Force helicopters and taken to the Aviation Museum in Maracay for restoration.⁴⁹ It was later moved to the airport at Ciudad Bolivar where it remains displayed on the green in front of the passenger terminal under the haphazard care of the Director of Culture for the State of Bolivar. The State of Bolivar refuses to relinquish the airplane to the federal government.⁵⁰

The federal government represented by the Venezuelan Air Force would like to return El Rio Caroni to the Museum of Aviation in Maracay so that it can be properly conserved under controlled museum

conditions. In exchange, the Air Force would give the State of Bolivar a life-sized model that is under construction at the museum.⁵¹

Jimmie Angel never dreamed that his airplane would become a national monument or that its care and location would be contentious issue. Many years before, when asked by Pat Grant if he wanted his plane taken off Auyan-tepui Jimmie replied, "No, as long as it stays up there, it will be a memory of me."⁵²

END NOTES

¹ The Jimmie Angel Historical Project (JAHP) was organized in 1996 in the State of California as a 501(c)(3) not for profit corporation, EIN 68-0372407. Two of the six board members are citizens of Venezuela. The purposes of the JAHP include providing accurate information about Jimmie Angel and his associates, restoring, and preserving his airplane "El Rio Caroni," and publishing articles about him and his era of exploration. The JAHP also maintains an archive that is shared with museum curators and film and print writers.

² Ted Hatfield. (Summer, 1999). Arcata, California. (Telephone interview). Hatfield called to discuss an article that he was developing for *Adventure – National Geographic*.

³ John Random (random@dial.pipex.com). (1998, January 1). E-mail to Karen Angel (kangel@humboldt1.com).

⁴ Many of the stories about Jimmie Angel's adventures are from the period 1917 to mid 1920's. Angel's family members and interviewed informants can not substantiate many of his activities during much of this period. Nor have documents been found that can substantiate some of his more legendary activities.

Angel is frequently referred to as a World War I Ace with service either in the Royal British Flying Corps or the U.S. Army Air Corps. Record searches in the U.S.A. and the U.K. has not revealed any information about Angel's service:

United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (1996, June 13) "Enquirers for soldiers' records are warned that a majority of the First World War were destroyed by enemy air action in 1940 and of those that survived, many are in very poor condition having been damaged by fire and water."

A fire in 1973 destroyed approximately 16-18 million (80%) of the Official Military Personnel Files for United States Army personnel discharged between November 1, 1912 to January 1, 1960. National Archives and Records Administration, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri. (Online). Available HTTP: <http://www.nara.gov/regional/mprfire.html>. (2001, April 28).

Middleton, Harry. (1997, December 26). Paradise, California. (Interview). Middleton stated that he first met Jimmie Angel at an airfield in Texarcana, Texas in 1919 or 1920. Middleton understood that Jimmie Angel had been the Crew Chief (mechanic) assigned to Eddie Rickenbacker's 94th "Hat-in-the-

Ring" Squadron in France. If Middleton's account is accurate, Angel did not learn to fly until 1919 or 1920 when he was age 20 or 21. In 1930, Middleton, who was employed by a subsidiary of Pan American Airways in Mexico, met K.K. Hoffman who introduced himself as a Lieutenant in the 94th. Hoffman told Middleton that Angel was Crew Chief for the 94th.

5 Marie Sanders Angel, The Angel Falls (1978 Unpublished manuscript).

6 Rolan Parker Angel. (1995, May 12). Santa Barbara, California. (Interview).

7 Clyde Marshall Angel. (Multiple interviews 1956-1999). Paradise and Chico, California. My father Clyde (1917-1999) was the youngest of the five Angel brothers and the only brother who was not a pilot. Jimmie's three other brothers were closer to him in age and worked with him in aviation. William and Parker participated with their wives and Jimmie and his first wife Virginia Martin Angel in the Angel Brothers Flying Circus in the 1920's. The brothers are William Edward "Eddie" Angel (1903-1975), Parker Henry Angel (1904-1985), and Clifford Esby Angel (1906-1994). William, Parker, Clifford, and their father Glenn Davis Angel lived the last years of their lives near Clyde in Butte County, California. Except for Jimmie, I knew all the Angels noted above.

8 Canaima National Park. Cartografia Nacional. CM-3289339. Indian Communities in Canaima National Park are ethnically Pemon, belonging to the Arekuna, Taurepane and Kamaracota families.

9 Canaima National Park.

10 "Flyers Seeking Gold Mine," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, September 3, 1933. Angel and Curry left Muskogee, Oklahoma on August 26, 1933 for Venezuela in search of a lost gold mine.

11 Marie Sanders Angel (circa 1904 -1987) declared November 14, 1933 the date of discovery in her manuscript. In the early 1960's, Marie Angel loaned Jimmie Angel's logbook, which included the 1933 flight, to a man named Marvin Grigsby. Grigsby failed to return the logbook, other documents, and photographs to her.

John A. de Coup-Crank, (1997, May 28). Paradise, California (Interview). A retired detective with the Los Angeles Police Department, de Coup-Crank verified that Grigsby had possession of the missing materials during a police investigation in 1962.

Paul Eversole, who studied the Jimmie Angel story for over 30 years, reported to Clyde Marshall Angel in a 1990 interview in Chico, California that he saw the logbooks when he interviewed Grigsby and that November 14, 1933 is the correct date.

2 Marie Sanders Angel travelled with Jimmie Angel and his brother Parker Angel To South America in March 1935. She did not have a visa to enter Venezuela and stayed in Barranquilla, Columbia while the brothers continued to Venezuela for an exploration of the Gran Sabana with Durand A. Hall and L.R. Dennison.

13 Jimmie Angel and Virginia Martin were married in 1922 in Coffeyville, Kansas.

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- Martin (circa 1904-1988) was a pilot, wingwalker, and parachute jumper. After They separated in 1933, Jimmie and Virginia apparently never divorced and maintained contact the balance of his life.
- 14 James Herbert Glenn Angel was born November 10, 1943 in Managua, Nicaragua. Rolan Parker Angel was born August 13, 1947 in San Jose, Costa Rica. Rolan' twin brother died a few days after his birth.
- 15 L. R. Dennison, Devil's Mountain (New York, 1942), p. 28.
- 16 E. Thomas Gilliard, "Unchallenged Champion," *Natural History, The Magazine of the American Museum of Natural History*, (December 1940), p. 261.
- 17 Joseph P. Juptner, *Metal "Flamingo", G-2-W*, "U.S. Civil Aircraft, Vol. 2 (1964). The Metal Aircraft Corporation manufactured El Rio Caroni (Registration Number NC-9487) in 1929 at Lunken Airport, Cincinnati, Ohio. It was the eleventh of twenty-one airplanes of its class produced. Its welded steel tube framework is covered with aluminum alloy.
- 18 Carmen Diana Dearden. (1996, March 7). Caracas, Venezuela. (Interview).Gustav Heny was born in 1902 and died in Caracas, Venezuela in 1982.
- 19 Enrique Escobar Lucca. (1996, February 29). Caracas, Venezuela. (Interview). Heny was tall and slender as was often called "Cabuya," string in Spanish. Lucca maintains the archive of Heny's Auyan-tepui expedition photographs. **[2021 Note:** The Jimmie Angel Historical Project now maintains Heny's Archive] Also see Enrique Lucca Escobar, "El Ataerrizaje De Jimmy Angel Sobre El Auyantepuy 33 Anos Despues," *Lineas*, (April 1970), No. 156.
- 20 Charles Nicholl, The Creature in the Map (London, 1995), p. 217.
- 21 Gilliard, *Natural History*. Captain Felix Cardona Puig was born in Barcelona, Spain. A botanist, he explored the Gran Sabana guiding several scientific research expeditions to the region including the American Museum of Natural History's 1937-1938 expedition to Auyan-tepui.
- 22 Carmen Heny. (1996, March 7). Caracas, Venezuela. (Interview).
- 23 Lucca.
- 24 Marie Sanders Angel.
- 25 Lucca.
- 26 Jimmy Maruall. (1996, February 28). Caracas, Venezuela. (Interview). Angel's note remained in the airplane until Alejandro Laime removed it in 1957. Laime, a Latvian who lived for many years in the Gran Sabana, was photojournalist Ruth Robertson's guide on her successful 1949 expedition to measure Angel Falls.
- 27 Lucca.

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- 28 Marie Sanders Angel. Cardona was responsible for communications from Guayaraca to the Angel landing party on Auyantepuy. Informants interviewed and Marie Angel's unpublished manuscript reveal that Cardona was very jealous of Angel's notoriety. The Angels and Heny believed that Cardona's failure to maintain radio contact with them during their struggle to be rescued from Auyan-tepui was intentional.
- 29 Gilliard, *Natural History*. Dr. William H. Phelps, Sr. (1875-1965) was an American businessman and eminent scientist residing in Caracas, Venezuela. He sponsored the 1937-1938 American Museum of Natural History expedition led by Dr. George H. H. Tate to the Gran Sabana. Jimmie Angel was to have been the pilot for the expedition, however he was unavailable because his airplane was lost on Auyan-tepui on October 9, 1937.
- 30 Heny.
- 31 Kathleen D. Phelps. (1996, March 13). Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela. (Interview). A leading Venezuelan conservationist and widow of William H. Phelps, Jr., she created some of the illustrations for *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* by Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee and William H. Phelps, Jr. (Princeton, 1978).
- 32 Douglas Pridham (viva@telcel.net.ve). (2001, November 12). E-mail to Karen Angel (kangel@humboldt1.com). Heny's Trail is currently referred to as the Uruyen - Falls route.
- 33 E. Thomas Gilliard, "The Eighth Wonder of the World," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 26, 1941, p. 71.
- 34 Gilliard, *Natural History*, p. 260.
- 35 As a boy James Crawford Angel was called Crawford. As an adult he wanted to be called "Jimmie." He was constantly correcting the spelling of his name from Jimmy to Jimmie. The Jimmie Angel Historical Project continues with this task for him.
- 36 Gilliard, *Natural History*, p. 271.
- 37 Marie Sanders Angel. (1941, December 8). Canal Zone. (Letter).
- 38 Marie Sanders Angel, The Angel Falls.
- 39 Ruth Robertson, Churún Meru – The Tallest Angel (Ardmore, 1975). pp. 205-206. The title of Robertson's book reflects a common error during her time. The Churun River is the source of the Churun Meru (waterfall), not the Angel Falls.
- 40 Ruth Robertson, "Jungle Journey to the World's Highest Waterfall," *National Geographic*, November 1949.
- 41 Robertson, Churun Meru, p. 330.
- 42 Rolan Parker Angel.
- 43 Glenn Davis Angel. (1957, January 15). Compton, California. (Letter). Jimmie Angel's father was born in Franklin, North Carolina in 1877 and died in 1969 in Chico, California.

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- 44 *Certificate of Death in Canal Zone*. James Angel. File No. 2356. December 8, 1956.
- 45 Portal of the Folded Wings. December 15, 1957.
- 46 Carmen Heny.
- 47 Patricia Grant. (1996, May 23). Oscola, Florida. (Letter). Grant was born in 1920 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and died in 1999 in Oscola, Florida.
- 48 Venezuelan Official Gazette #27533, September 3, 1964.
- 49 Col. Juan Flores Blanco, Director Aviation Museum. (1996, March 11). Maracay, Venezuela. (Interview). Moreno, Chief Restorer of Airplanes, Aviation Museum. (1996, March 11). Maracay, Venezuela. (Interview).
- 50 Victor Jose Silva Medina, Director of Culture for the State of Bolivar. (1996, March 13). Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela. (Interview).
- 51 Commanding General of the Venezuela Air Force, Juan Antonio Paredes Nino. (1996, March 15). Caracas, Venezuela. (Interview).
- 52 Grant.

Angel Falls & Jimmie Angel by Karen Angel. Karen Angel is the niece of Jimmie Angel and President of the Jimmie Angel Historical Project (JAHP). The JAHP's mission is to provide accurate information about Jimmie Angel. She is working on three books about her uncle: a photo biography for the JAHP; for herself an historical novel and an autobiographical account of her search for the truth about Jimmie Angel. Surely Angel Falls in Venezuela's vast Canaima National Park was known to the indigenous Pemon people of the southeastern Gran Sabana region for thousands of years. Jimmy Angel, a bush pilot searching for gold and diamonds, officially discovered Angel Falls. During his trip Jimmy Angel suddenly came upon the falls in 1935. The aviator Jimmy Angel was born in Springfield, MO. Angel became famous throughout Latin America as a barnstormer, almost a legendary figure who made claims of great wealth, and secret information of hidden gold and diamond mines. He spent his early childhood in Springfield, then moved to Birmingham, Alabama. As a teenager Angel became an airplane mechanic. One day he took his first flight quite by accident. He recalled that he had been working in the cockpit of a plane when the craft suddenly began to roll down a ramp. On the spur of the moment, young Angel felt the urge to fly. Rather, the falls are named for Jimmie Angel, a Missouri-born aviator who, in 1937, landed his plane on the *tepui*, or table-top mountain, from which the nearly one-kilometre-high falls tumble. Intrigued by how little I could discover about Jimmie Angel in mainstream sources, I contacted his niece, Karen Angel, who, at the age of eight, was given a blank photo album and the task of recording her family's history. Very few Americans have heard of Jimmie but in Venezuela, Karen found, practically everyone had; indeed, some believed he was alive and hiding, perhaps, in the jungles he had so often overflowed. Today Karen runs the Jimmie Angel Historical Project, and last year she published *Angel's Flight*, a biography of her uncle. Jimmie Angel searched Venezuela's *Lost World* for a fabled river of gold, but all he found was a waterfall—the world's tallest, as it turned out. Pilot and adventurer James Crawford Angel lived a life of contradictions in which reality sometimes blurred with fiction. Angel loved to spin tales almost as much as he loved flying. He actively participated in the creation of the various legends about his colorful life, acknowledges his niece Karen Angel, who has dedicated years to tracing his career. Born in southwest Missouri in 1899, Jimmie Angel claimed he taught himself to fly at the age of 14, one of the stories about him that cannot be verified.