

## TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND

by Paul G. Stanley and friends

This newsletter is dedicated to a good personal friend / colleague and especially a friend of the Pemón people of Canaima National Park, Venezuela.

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, ironically Venezuelan Independence Day, Capt. Alfonso was on one of his personal missions in Kamarata Valley delivering goods and supplies to the communities of Kamarata and Uriman in his small six-seater Cessna. Before taking off in pretty nasty weather conditions from Kamarata he shouted proudly to Hortensia the Capitana of Kamarata “Hortensia, tomorrow I am coming with Paul!” These were Alfonso’s last words, telling the community he was coming with me the following morning.

For 40 years Capitan Alfonso flew over the same terrain, the same tepuis and savannas and could literally fall asleep and still find his way! He knew the area like the back of his hand. Or so we all thought...unfortunately, his pilot colleagues surmise, he probably turned off his GPS navigation system and decided to rely on his own navigational abilities that have served him so well over the years. He climbed high but not high enough to clear Ptari Tepui one of the tallest peaks in the area.

Capt. Alfonso will always be remembered fondly by all of us at Angel Conservation and our sister organization, Fundacion Etnika in Venezuela. Alfonso helped Angel Conservation, Fundacion Etnika and especially the Pemón - he brought supplies to remote indigenous communities, transported sick and infirmed folks out of the park to receive medical attention and was a friend to all. He always had a smile or joke for everyone and loved to “pull people’s legs.” I remember: “Paul you cannot bring all these bags! Oh for my friends the Pemón that’s different!”

We all will miss him.

*“From the Pemón people of Kamarata Valley, members of Angel Conservation and Fundacion Etnika – and myself - your good friend Paul Stanley. Alfonso, may you rest in peace and your spirit be an inspiration and dwell forever amongst us all.”*