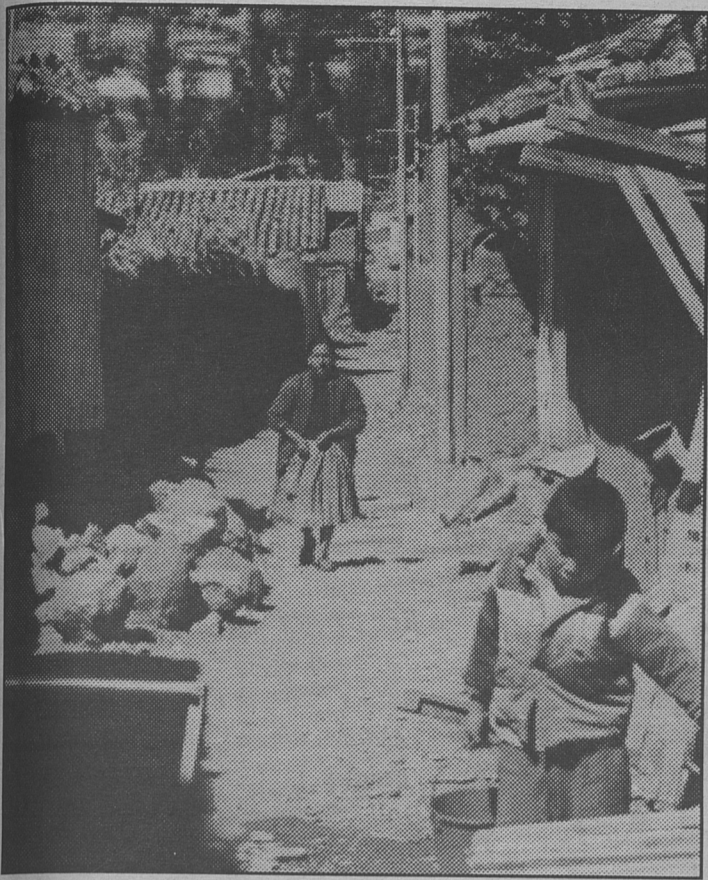


== travel ==



I thought, "I will undoubtedly meet dozens, perhaps hundreds, of Apus in the next five days - but I won't forget you."

I have been trying to remember the Grandfather's words and to honor the Apus and Pachamama, Mother Earth, and to ask permission, and to give offerings.

Almost immediately, we were to cross a raging river on a shaky wood plank bridge. And to make our offering and ask permission halfway across. And to give to the river what we no longer need; and then, facing the river coming at us, to ask for what we want to receive.

I needed to tell everyone how frightened I was and to ask for support. I went first. Don promised to back me up. With the aid of all the preparations that have gone on over the last year - and, I feel especially, with the aid of the Apu whom I lately honored and whom I promised not to forget - and who knows with what support from what Guides, I stepped onto the bridge. I felt fear, but I did not feel as though I were about to have a psychotic episode. Grounding myself as much as possible, I went halfway across the

bridge, faced downstream, and did the ceremony with three coca leaves. Then I turned to face the oncoming torrent. I forgot to ask permission, or to ask for anything, or to set intention. I felt only gratitude, which I expressed both to the river and to the Apu. After I

was across, I remembered to ask for permission to make this journey; and I asked for help in remembering always my commitment to service; and I asked for help in remembering always to honor Mother Earth.

remember....

Grandfather told us always to ask permission of the Apus, the spirits of the mountains, to approach the sacred places - and also to ask the Apus' permission to go "beyond the gate": to learn more.

He told us to remember to offer some of everything to the Earth, and to make offerings to the Apus. And to make the offerings be for everyone. Or maybe it was to dedicate all we receive to the betterment of the world. I have lost it already. I am hoping I will re-capture it on the trail.

On May 3, after two days in Cuzco to explore and to get used to the altitude, we took the train up out of Cuzco and then along the Urubamba River, the sacred river of the Incas, toward Machu Picchu. None of us sat still for very long. We exchanged seats constantly, to make touch with each other; and we took turns sticking our heads out the windows to get the most immediate experience of how the Sacred Valley looked and felt. Cameras clicked. There was lots of laughter.

The Urubamba is a fast river. As we watched it from the train, I remembered my intense fear of heights, and especially of bridges - and especially of bridges high above torrential rivers. I remembered the childhood experience that was the prototype of my fear, and I talked about it with my friends on the train.

May 3, 2000
We took the train from Cuzco across the valley to I now not what place, to start the hike. Some of us walked up to a sacred spot that is right here, and there was a peaceful energy place, with an entrance

directly facing the local Apu, whose name Chidakash, our tour guide, does not know. My first Apu. I did not know what to do to honor him. I put my hands together in a gesture of respect. I touched my head to the ground. Finally, I asked permission and then held three coca leaves and blew into them, as is the Andean custom.

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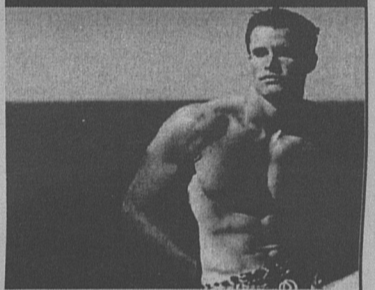
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