

Machu Picchu continued from page 35

And I wept a little and I thanked the river and the Apu and the other Apus and the Guides again.

Namaste.

That was my first moment on the Inca Trail. During the next five days we hiked – in groups, in pairs, alone – through some of the most beautiful country I’ve ever seen. There were dry stretches, with cactus and century plants; farms with llamas grazing; cloud forests; lush green places with bamboo and copper-colored moss a foot thick (good for a facial). Everywhere, always, were steep valleys and jagged peaks, some snow-covered.

There were many ruins – or sacred places, as we preferred to call them – which we

rying very little extra weight, and despite the wads of coca leaves constantly in our cheeks, we all found it a challenging trek. Perhaps the most difficult stretch was the climb to Dead Woman’s Pass, at 14,000 feet. I was the last to reach the top and was welcomed by the most love-filled group hug of my life.

Then comes the downhill – or downstairs – part, in which you learn everything you ever wanted to know about your knees.

But the mist is gathering – and then clearing; and Humberto or Puma is playing the Andean flute; and the echo is bouncing off the hills; and all around are the Apus, looking down and blessing our every step and receiving our constant

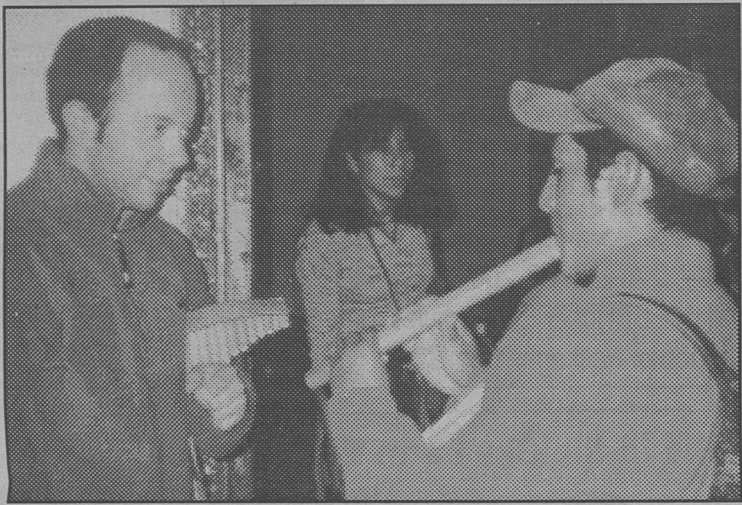


place, meditating and dozing.

It was a thrill to arrive at the Sun Gate this morning: the recognition that we all had made it. Lots of hugging. The Hokey-Pokey. A little ceremony....

The views here, as everywhere along the trail, are spectacular beyond description. No photographs have a chance of capturing them....

Two of the women in our group got married in Machu Picchu. That evening, in Aguas Calientes – the village a short bus ride from Machu Picchu – at tables outside of Inka’s Pizza (we’re back in civilization now), we toasted them with Champagne. A band of musicians in the square saw us, came to the table, and started playing and singing Happy Birthday. Our laughter only encouraged them to sing more and more choruses – in English, in Spanish, slow, fast. There was no way we could explain to them, through our tears of laughter, that it was nobody’s birthday: that two women who love each other had gotten married that morning in Machu Picchu. ▼



explored with such disregard for the passage of time that our tour guides were at their wits’ end to get us to each campsite before nightfall.

Porters carried the tents and our heavy gear and scurried past us on the trail each day to set up camp for the following night. The porters were angels. Their strength and stamina were phenomenal, and they were unfailingly good-humored. Some of us surely could not have made the trip without them.

The trail is mostly steep. Much of it consists of stone steps. But I think the major factor was the altitude. Even car-

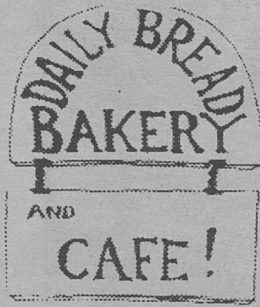
honoring of them. Apu Wakkaywillka. Apu Salkkantay.

May I don't know, 2000

There has been zero time.

We arrived in Machu Picchu this morning. The place is tremendously impressive: you need 3-D and 360 degrees. I am sitting in the sun in a grassy

Look for more photos of Sam’s trip on the in the August update of www.mountainpridemedi.org



Betsy's off to a life of her own. Jason & Aaron will make "the Bread" home. Maple Wheat, Tea Cakes, TLT's, Fries, Daily Bread continues to RISE!

Watch for **EXPANDED** menu options!

THE VERMONT RAINBOW CONNECTION

THE T.V. SHOW BY, FOR AND ABOUT VERMONT'S L/G/B/T COMMUNITY AND OUR SUPPORTERS!

Sit back and enjoy our August program filled with news, resources and an informative interview by co-anchors Sharon Randall and Michael James

FOCUS ON SEGMENT:

Sit back and enjoy footage from VT Pride 2000 Parade/Rally! Don't miss it!

Adelphia (CH. 13) (Ludlow, Plymouth, Woodstock) Fri 9pm—

Adelphia (CH. 15) (Greater Burlington area) Fri 9pm

Adelphia (CH. 15) (Montpelier, Waterbury, Randolph)

2nd & 4th Fri 7:30pm

Lake Champlain (CH. 2) Call for times and dates 802-862-5724

Helicon (CH. 7) (Barre) 2nd & 4th Mon 8:30pm

BCTV (CH. 8) (Brattleboro) call 257-0888 for air days/time

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times

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WENO (CH.15) (Enosburg, Berkshire, Richford) 1st & 3rd Sun at

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