

## Friday, October 2, 2009 Philadelphia – Miami - Lima

I'm sorry I had to cancel my trip yesterday and didn't get to meet Bruce, Dena and Gigi and all of the wonderful people in Tarapoto. I'm also sorry to have caused so many problems for Bridget and Jean whose airline reservations seemed to have been canceled when mine were. But it did give me a chance to talk to Bridget many times and made me feel part of the group. I appreciated Bridget's and Juan Jose's e-mail updates during the week. Much as I would have liked to be with you, it was a good thing I stayed home. Besides needing to be home to take care of Larre, I had a fever, sinus infection and an infected thumb. It just wasn't meant to be. At 11:51 PM I was on the computer and I suddenly got a terrible earache. About 10 minutes later, I checked on your flight from Miami and it left at 11:51. Eerie! *Sue Hoke*

Nine of us flew from Philadelphia to Miami where we met Dena and Gigi. Our plane to Lima left just before midnight. *Bruce Cutler*

## Saturday, Oct. 3, 2009 Lima – Tarapoto

Lan (Peruvian National Airline) flight from Miami to Lima is uneventful - serve an adequate dinner around 2 am - arrive in Lima on time, 4 am, actually 5 am our time since Peru doesn't observe Daylight Saving Time. Retrieve luggage & go through customs, I'm given a red light which is no problem. They simply re-inspect bag & wave me through. Since we have several hours until the Tarapoto flight, we decide to have breakfast - most of the group opt for MacDonal'd's, the rest of us go to a Peruvian restaurant. Intrigued by the description of French Toast, Bernie and I elect to have that - oops - it's a Continental Breakfast consisting of 2 slices of dry toast with a little jam- ADAPT!!



Locate the flight to Tarapoto in a far corner of the airport - small plane filled to capacity - one hour flight over snow -

covered Andes. On arrival we glimpse our host families, arrayed in green FF vests, waiting for us. Marietta and I are warmly embraced by Faustino and Rosa Hidalgo who bundled us into a taxi (a rather decrepit station wagon) and off to their home - which turns out to be -not a house -but a small (13 rooms) hotel which they own. We are given a comfortable room with private bath on the first floor. Drop bags &



freshen up a bit before departing by taxi for an al fresco lunch in a private club overlooking a swimming pool. The meal is somewhat of a mystery to us, following a long discussion about fish, Rosa and Faustino are given fish, but I'm not certain what Marietta & I ate!! It's very good but definitely NOT fish maybe pork or chicken?? *Jean Sedar*



This evening there was a welcome dinner at the home of Jose Manuel Chong and Elizabeth. All the hosts and ambassadors were introduced and there was lots of entertainment. School children entertained us. There were dancers in Peruvian costumes. Gigi joined the dancers. There was guitar music and at the end everyone joined hands and sang. *Bruce Cutler*



We got to Tarapoto at noon today, and were met by droves of Friendship Force people in green FF vests. That was wonderful. Our hosts took us home and we were able to shower and change. It felt really good to change clothes.



Our home is spectacular. It is vacation just being here. The hosts are happy, kind people. We are going to get along really well. *Bridget Kasinskas*

### Sunday, October 04, 2009 Tarapoto

After a breakfast of papaya, chicken and tea my host Hugo and I took a ride on an open air motorbike taxis to the meeting location where we met up with other members of the Tarapoto club and our other members. Jim arrived and stated that he had a great breakfast and wonderful coffee.



We met a hotel that was owned by one of the members of the Tarapoto club. It was explained to me that a native tribe that lived around a small lake founded Tarapoto. Tara was a Palm tree. And the natives sold thing in the leaves of the

palm tree. That is how the name Tarapoto, or palm leaf came about.



We all got on a tour bus and went into the country in San Martin. We saw lots of tobacco farms on our trip. We went up in the mountains and could see the beautiful countryside and what appears to be a small winding river.

As we came down the other side of the mountain the winding river got bigger and bigger until we realized it was a very large river with a strong fast moving current. We had to cross the river on a rather small ferry, which was pulled across the river by the current of the river. The



ferry could only accommodate our bus and one other car. We had to stand on the sides of the ferry as it crossed the river.

Upon crossing the river we got back on the bus and went to the city of Sauce. We stopped at a “mothers’ club”, where they made arts and crafts to support the local school. I purchased a colorful hand painted landscape.



We then went on to “El Sauce Resort”, which was an upscale resort with native huts as accommodations for guests. The facilities were built using all natural local resources. They had bedrooms, bathrooms, sitting areas, and some had air conditioning.



We then tour the lake referred to as the blue lake.

We were told the myth of the mermaid, which is bad luck for men, and shown the statue of the mermaid. This is a government-protected area, what we refer to as green spaces.



Private persons had purchased land on the lake before it was protected but the government is encouraging free access. Three rivers feed the lake. We stopped and walked through the jungle and visited a government build resort where many Peruvian writers come to relax.



Upon returning to the El Sauce resort we were greeted by the mayor of the local town and treated to a wonderful meal of local fish, beets, bananas, potatoes, onion, plantains, tomatoes and broccoli. The food is very fresh and served with a variety of



local juices.

We then return to our host home aboard the bus having to cross the river on the ferry again. We did have to stop to place logs over a stream so that the bus could cross at a small village. This became a major operation and the whole village came out to watch. *Osa Meekins*

### October 5, 2009 Tarapoto

Bright and early, we boarded the bus to visit the Institute of Tropical Cultures. (Some operating funds come from the USA.) There



they do research and educate the farmers to improve the quality and quantity of the cocoa bean, mostly. For diversity they experiment with many other native fruits, as well as coffee beans. While walking through their orchards with a guide, we were invited to taste many of the ripe fruits. Most likely I ate more fruit there in an hour than I would normally eat in a week!



We got some relief from the hot sun when they took us inside to view and hear what they do in their extensive laboratories.



Last, but not least, they ushered us to a shaded outdoor area where they served fresh fruit juices and little cakes. Very refreshing!



After boarding our bus again, we continued to a Fishery Experimental Station where research on the big fish, Piche, is done. (Piche is good for eating.) It was hard to get a good look at the fish because the



water in the manmade lakes was muddy. However, we could see them swallow the tennis ball size fish meal balls which we threw in the lake.



We were then invited to have lunch (their big meal of the day) at a delicious buffet prepared by Friendship Force members. Of course there was fried fish, fish steamed in banana leaves and bananas or plantains prepared in different ways, plus several kinds of salads.



The setting for lunch was unique, between the two manmade lakes there was an elevated thatched roofed hut/room, overlooking the lakes and the mountains in the background, very beautiful, but hot and humid.

After lunch (the hottest part of the day), we climbed on our air-conditioned bus to visit the 120 feet high refreshing waterfalls of Ahuashiyacu. We walked up to the base of the waterfalls along a steep winding and sometimes uneven path. But it was beautiful when you stopped to look around. Gwen even ventured to walk under the falls, even after repeated calls for her to come back.





After returning to Tarapoto, we had a chance to freshen up before attending a reception ceremony given by the mayor at City Hall of Tarapoto. And what a reception it was: a whole coconut opened just enough to fit a straw in to sip/suck out the milk, a triple-decker sandwich and Peruvian coffee. As usual, gifts were exchanged between Cherry Hill and Tarapoto and



speeches were made. Gwen made the comment during her speech that she had never met such a handsome mayor before, and he was **very** handsome!



Our group all went out for ice cream afterwards. We walked home. *Marietta Loercher*

Following the mayor's reception, many of us walk to a nearby ice cream parlor to enjoy Peruvian ice cream (which is very good). Rosa, Faustino, Marietta & I walked back to the hotel and waited till 9 pm before boarding the ubiquitous motorcycle taxis (two taxis because there



are 4 of us, and the vehicle accommodates only two plus the driver) and rocketing off to a Chinese restaurant. However when we arrive at the destination there doesn't seem to be a restaurant - only houses- finally select one and ring the doorbell whereupon Gwen pops out accompanied by Darita, her hostess, and her son and Jim and his hostess. We stroll to a nearby Chinese restaurant and try to order a meal. Since we aren't very hungry, some of us order Won Ton soup which arrives in a enormous bowl containing cabbage, chicken, won tons and a small hardboiled egg - maybe a quail egg?? Very good. Gwen wants only a small dessert so she asks for a peach and is presented with a huge bowl of canned peaches - she's speechless, the expression on her face is so funny! Meanwhile Jim attempts to order an egg roll, evidently an unknown item to the waiters who produce diced meat and veggies but not contained in a pastry. After much laughter we conclude that the restaurant staff is most accommodating, but our descriptive abilities are lacking.

*Jean*

## Tuesday, October 6, 2009 Tarapoto

Up at 7 am for breakfast after eating we take the ubiquitous rickshaws to the primary school where we are to make a



\$200 donation. The children, ranging in age from 4 to 6 and dressed in their best, are already assembled when we arrive. They are truly adorable and they perform for us, starting with 2 little girls dancing in glittering gold costumes, followed by 4 little girls in lovely authentic costumes



doing a traditional dance. All the children sing for us and one young lad does a recitation.

The mayor of Tarapoto, ever the politician and not to miss a photo - op,

appears to shake hands with each of us. He promises to match our gift which will be used to put a roof on an extension to the school which is already under construction. *Jean*



We had breakfast with Juan Jose and Cecilia then we went to the kindergarten with everybody.



The Mayor of Tarapoto showed up and lots of press. It was wonderful. They gave us

a show and then the mayor said he will donate the cement for the floor. It was quite a moving experience for me. They are going to put a roof over a part of the kindergarten with our money. Then the mayor was shamed into giving the

cement for the new floor. It was all good. What a wonderful thing to do for us. These people couldn't be nicer or more generous. What a great place!

*Bridget*



This was a busy day for us with visits to the Institucion Educative Inicial #080, Oro Verde Coffee Cooperative and the Kechwa Community of Waiku.

Our morning began with all of us meeting at the home of Juan Jose and his wife, Cecilia. Juan Jose is the



exchange director for the Tarapoto Friendship Force Club. From there we took our bus to the Institucion Educativa Inical. Our Friendship Force donated money to purchase a roof for a section of the school. We were greeted by adorable children in bright yellow and white uniforms who sang a welcome song for us. We were then welcomed by a representative from the parent teacher association as well as the mayor of Tarapoto who thanked us for our contribution to the school.

The contribution of \$200 was presented to the school by Gwen Deas. We were entertained by two little girls in gold sequined outfits, a recitation of a poem, and a traditional dance of Peru by several of the kindergarten children.

These children were typical of children all over the world - some were shy, others definitely outgoing and precocious.



From there we went to the Cooperative Agraria Cafetaleda "Oro Verde" Lida where we were taken on a tour by employees of the co-op. This is in the province of Lamas, 280 meters above sea level. There are 600 members of the co-op which processes cocoa and coffee products which they export to Central America, Europe and North America. Since all of their products

are organic, no chemicals are used.

Our next stop was in the city square of Lamas, the capital of the Amazon area. In 2005 a strong earthquake struck the area killing two people. There was much damage and rebuilding is still taking place. It is the second oldest city founded by the Spanish in the Amazon region.



We were taken on a tour of art classes being held in the community center. These classes were held for children



in their own age bracket where they are instructed in the art of native Amazon artists. The artist in charge of the school had paintings hung around the perimeter of the room. We followed him from painting to painting





as he explained the meaning of each painting.  
 We were then all presented with a proclamation from the province of Lamas honoring our visit to them.



Our evening activities included small dinner parties at various homes and I once again found myself back in the home of Juan Jose and his wife for a very lovely dinner party. *Bernie Williams*

**Wednesday, October 7, 2009  
 Tarapoto**



The mayor of Moyobamba had a big reception for



us as well as inviting us to the orchid festival in the beginning of November. Then they had a traditional celebration and dance just for us and gave us all flyers for the festival to advertise at home and a present of a plastic orchid. It was really beautiful. *Bridget*



In the morning we visited a park where kids were swimming in the river. We walked to the headwaters of a river which was a lovely scene with the water and lush canopy.



This afternoon we had lunch with the Mayor of Moyobamba and other city dignitaries. (Moyobamba is the oldest city in this region of the Amazon.) They gave us a very warm welcome; the mayor stated that he was going to work on having a Friendship Force Chapter in Moyobamba.



Following lunch, there was a tour of the business district. Representatives from the business association explained that they are working to increase tourism





with the main attraction being the orchid industry.

The highlight of the afternoon was the traditional dance performed by people ranging in age from 6 to 66. In celebration of a holiday a couple of days later, a tree was cut down. Many of us joined the dancing and chopping down the tree.

*Dena Wild*



#### **Thursday, October 8, 2009 Tarapoto**

Today is our free day. But it has been go go go the whole time. Fabulous welcome from all. The people of Tarapoto are really unbelievable. I give them all A plus. *Bridget*

The Friendship Force had a free day today. For nearly a week we had been touring with our host families in the larger groups. Today we planned to travel with our hosts to see a bridge that they were especially proud to show. We saw from our trip to Sauce earlier in the week where the only way across the river was a ferry – two cars at a time per hour in one direction – that a bridge is a huge solution to many people's problems.

Unfortunately Bridget became sick that day and stayed close to the house. Pety made her Sopa de la Mama, a chicken-vegetable soup that cures anything. Word seemed to travel fast through the FF community and there were lots of calls of concern and suggestions about remedies.

Esau and I went to see the Lions Club social that was being held in Tarapoto. We arrived to see a small fairground with a set of pavilions covering a bar, buffet line and dance floor. It was early afternoon – people were gathered at the bar and the food was being set up. Being a retired mailman, I was happy to be introduced to a Peruvian letter carrier who described what his workday was like. Esau bought some typical food to take-out and we ventured on.

I wanted to see the main post office in town (something I do when I travel); so Esau and I walked



in and met the postmaster. The woman was delighted to have someone show an interest in her operation. She said that she had been working there a long time and that visitors only come to buy stamps and mail postcards. As we were walking out of the building we ran into others from the FF group and introduced them to the postmaster. The lady was showered with attention that afternoon.

We rejoined Pety and Bridget at the house and sat down to dinner. Bridget continued with Sopa de la Mama and we had the food from the Lions Club Social. The most interesting dish was Juane (rhymes with Swanee), which is a chicken piece within a green rice ball.

Juane is a special dish in some Peruvian families especially in the St. Martin district. It references St. John's head. (When it is served it looks like a head-on-a-plate.) It takes the greater part of a day to make. The mother will cook a chicken – an old hen - and divide it into pieces. She will make individual Juanes for each person in the family. If the daughter likes the thigh, that is what she gets along with hardboiled egg, olives, and other favorite goodies hiding in the rice ball. Then it is wrapped in the large green leaf used for cooking and boiled. It comes out – a big green rice ball on a plate. Wonderful tradition.

We ended the night with music. Esau sang. I played guitar. We worked on a couple of tunes for the final Friendship Force dinner the next day. The song we chose was **Flor Sin Retono** (Flower that will never bloom again), a sad Mexican lost-love song. Mexican music is very popular in Esau's

generation. They are the first recordings heard as kids. The music was very special.

Others in the group went to zoos, made canoe trips, visited waterfalls and guinea pig farms, took long dangerous cab rides, went white water rafting and visited scenic parks along a river. Our hosts know what a special place they live in and they certainly were proud to show it to us. *Joe & Bridget Kasinskas*



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The scheduled tour was canceled when a road was washed away so we have a free day. Following breakfast we walk to the main post office to buy stamps. It's an uphill trek on narrow sidewalks which

are poorly repaired; this is earthquake country, so one must watch your feet!! To complicate the situation many of the shops have merchandise stacked on the sidewalk, pedestrians are rushing about, and the street noise is deafening - a cacophony of motorcycles, cars and trucks. As we trudge onward we pass the Cielo Hotel (the assembly point for our excursions) and the proprietor and his wife come out to greet us. Finally we arrive at the post office, only to discover it's closed because of a holiday in honor of a Peruvian admiral who died in a naval battle with Chile.

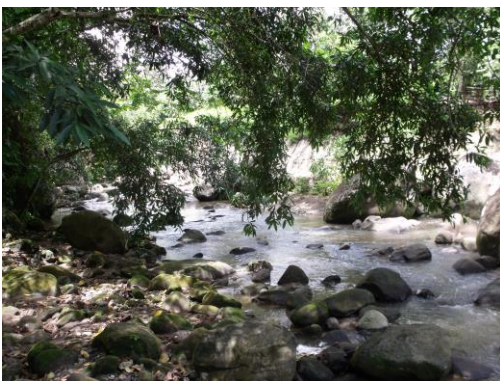


We decide to walk back through Zapata Land - streets which are crammed with shoe stores displaying their wares on the sidewalk. There I try to buy flip-flops because we've decided to go swimming in the river, but Rosa and Faustino won't allow me to pay and Faustino insists that I must have a heavier pair made of tires because the river is very rocky. Back at the hotel we



collect our bathing suits and towels and set off by rickshaw to a taxi stand where we take a rickety station wagon about 10 or 12 miles into the jungle to the Cumbaza River and the San Roque resort. The ride is pretty exciting. We zip along unpaved roads, single lane with no safety barriers, finally after about an hour of this, we arrive at a small bridge over a rushing stream where we leave the car and walk through a meadow to some buildings. This is the resort which is located on the banks of the river and lunch is being served in the restaurant. As we wait to order lunch we spot

a familiar face; it's Dena who has been white-water rafting with her host family!! Meanwhile Faustino talks to the lady in charge, and we're given the key to one of the cabins which is a nicely appointed double room with bath and porch. As soon as we change into bathing suits, it starts pouring rain, but undaunted we charge



ahead. The riverbed and shoreline are very rocky, Rosa and I go in to our waists but it's too cold and slippery to do more. Faustino and Marietta are more daring, walking out to mid-stream and Faustino actually swims a bit - meanwhile the rain has become a deluge so we decide to return to the room to shower and change. As I stand gazing out the window I spot the cook killing a chicken - that's going to be lunch-talk about fresh!! The rain continues to pour down while we enjoy our meal - this 3 hour shower is the most rain we have on the entire trip. We're tempted to

stay the night in this lovely spot, but medicines were left in Tarapoto so we must return. The departure trip in the taxi, which waited for us, is just as exciting as our

arrival plus we swerved into a herd of long-horned cattle as we rounded one curve, but we returned safely to Tarapoto about 5 pm.

This is the night we invite Rosa and Faustino to dinner. At 8:30 pm we pile into the motorized rickshaws and go to the Chalet Venezia. There we find Gwen treating her host family; they leave in a few minutes to go dancing. We have a very nice meal, and the chef (lady) who trained in Miami comes out to explain the menu to us. Faustino has roast beef, Marietta has ceviche, I have fish and Rosa has a salad plus wine and dessert. Great meal and reasonably priced. We are the only people in the restaurant when we leave after 10 pm. *Jean*

### **Friday, Oct. 9, 2009** Farewell Party and travel to Lima

Up at 7:45 am for 8:30 breakfast consisting of cheese sandwich, yogurt, soy flake cereal, prickly pears and coffee or tea. We present small gifts to Theresa, the maid, who was very kind to us - even washed our clothes. After eating Rosa left to take care of their dog, a Boxer, acting as a watch dog at their old house which was destroyed in an earthquake about 2 or 3 years ago. Once again Faustino guides Marietta and me to the main post office to purchase stamps. Here we meet Joe Kasinskas and his host, Joe has just talked to the post mistress who is delighted to speak to an American - she says tourists use the post office all the time, but they never talk to her! Following Joe's lead we chat with her for a few minutes. Marietta buys several very colorful stamps, and we return to the hotel to pack and get ready to leave at 12:30 for the party. Before we go Rosa and Theresa call us into the hotel dining area, and give us some small gifts. Somehow we manage to find room for these treasures in our already bursting suitcases.



At 12:45 pm we set off in 2 motorized rickshaws for the party. What a ride it turned out to be - we roar along for several miles being jostled this way and that on a badly repaired road and finally turn off on a dirt lane filled with pot holes. No one seems to know exactly how to get to the restaurant, but we spot a conical structure topped by a thatched roof which turns out to be the Rancho Vista. It's in a lovely area with a stunning view of Tarapoto in the distance. After an excellent buffet lunch, the entertainment starts. Two college students from the Univ. of San Martin perform an exotic dance which is quite explicit at times. Suddenly Diablo appears - cavorting around the stage clad in an elaborately gold embroidered blue suit and black devil's mask. Several of the Tarapoto FF members, in traditional costumes, perform Peruvian dances and entice many people onto the dance floor. After catching our breath we present our



New Jersey skit which was well received and wildly applauded. Dr. Lionel Flores, Tarapoto FF president, and his wife did a lovely dance which was quite moving. Joe K. plays the guitar while Tarapoto FF member sings and another member sings and accompanies himself on the guitar. This is a talented group of people who love to perform!! The increasing volume of the music forces us to take refuge outside on the lawn. The next performer, attired in a very ornate costume complete with large sombrero, representing a Mexican Vaquero or cowboy, sings and plays guitar for several numbers - I'm not certain but I think he may be a professional entertainer. The Tarapoto club presents a framed art work to Gwen who accepts graciously and reads a farewell poem (the one I received from Japanese ambassadors last May). Everyone is sad at the thought of leaving.



Everyone is sad at the thought of leaving. Faustino told us the party would last until 3 pm, but it was after 4 when we left, and it went on even as they were announcing it was ending. By a wonderful stroke of luck we are given a ride back to the hotel in an SUV, not sure my derriere could tolerate another trip in the fanny shaker over non-existent roads!!!

Once back at the hotel we finish packing, then Faustino asks us to sit down and close our eyes, whereupon he and Rosa present each of us with a Tarapoto FF eyeshade and shirt embroidered with our names and the US flag - we're amazed and very touched - what wonderful people. At 8 pm we set off for the airport and our 10:40 flight to Lima, clutching our bags we whiz off in the motorcycle taxis. True to form my difficulties with the airline continue, after some delay and many conferences between 4 or 5 airline agents, they issued my boarding pass, I pay my exit tax of \$4, we make our teary farewells and it's off to security where I manage to set off the sensors three times, finally they wand me and pass me through. I decide that my rings are causing the security snafu - must remember to remove them in the future.



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Flight leaves on time, in Lima we are met by a Marnella tour guide, Gennardo, who takes us to the bus and gives us info about Lima and tips about restaurants and things to do in the city as we are driven to the Miraflores district where our hotel, Posada del Inca, is located. Hotel is very nice -



Marietta and I have a two room suite with a large bathroom which has a tub and HOT, HOT water - ah such luxury!! Fall into bed at 2:30 am - what a day!!! Jean



At the conclusion of the party, we all joined hands and sang songs, including *Auld Lang Syne*. Bruce

### Saturday, October 10, 2009 Lima

We were staying in the hotel "Sonesta Posadas del Inca". The hotel was very nice with all the modern amenities. After staying up until 3:00AM talking with Jim about the warm of the people of Tarapoto and are individual experiences with our host we got up at 8:00 am to have breakfast with our group. We were all still about our wonderful experiences in

After breakfast us went on a casual the Miraflores district the flowers) of Lima. district had a central



Tarapoto. several of walk in (Look at The park were people sit and read the day's paper and drink coffee.



We were informed that later that evening there was to be an art exhibit and arts and crafts vendors. Around the park was a beautiful 1600 Spanish architecture church that we explored. There were also many American restaurants such as Starbucks, McDonalds as well as local stores and restaurants. We walked the boulevards window-shopping.

About 12:00 PM we met our tour guide Elzina who took us on our tour of Lima. Elzina shared with us that Lima was a city of about 8 million people. Lima is made up of 43 districts and each district has a mayor and a council. So in actuality, Lima was a conglomeration of cities.

Lima was actually a desert receiving less than 2 inches of rain per year. The greenery comes from several rivers that flow underground to the sea to the ocean. Lima is also above sea level, which we got to fully understand as we toured the coast. The ocean was below us as if we were on a mountain that suddenly dropping off into the ocean.

Lima experiences about 300 earthquake tremors per year. The houses are made of adobe and wood, which hold up very well. For tax purpose many of the homes have incomplete second or third floors. We stopped at Parque de Amor (Love Park) where there was a large statue of a man and woman in an embrace called “*El Beso*” or *The Kiss*. We walked the park and looked at the beautiful flowers of the region. We observed that many hang gliders with people were flying off the cliff to the sea.



There were statues of cows and it was explained that this was a yearly event where different local artists paint the cows and they are then auctioned with the proceeds going to charity. We then return to our hotel for a wonderful dinner at a very nice local restaurant. *Osa Meekins and Jim Dill*

### **Sunday, October 11 Lima**

After a buffet breakfast, we boarded our bus for a 20 mile ride to Pachacámac Ruins. Our tour guide Elzinia was very knowledgeable.



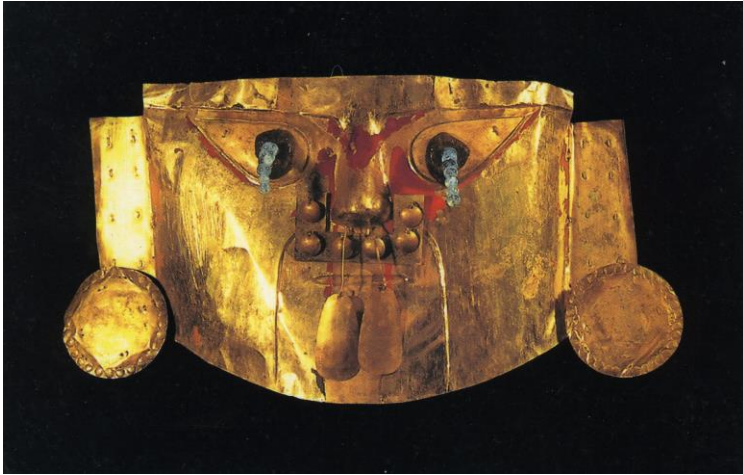
Pachacámac is probably one of the oldest ruins dating back to the year 200, during pre-Inca times. The pre-Inca construction shows that the God Pachacámac was revered and that the “Templo Pintado” (colored temple) and the “Templo Viejo” (old temple) were ceremonial centers for the inhabitants of the valley. (Mostly farmers,



who worked the land, lived in the valley.)

After the Inca conquest, they added the “Templo de Inti” or Temple of the Sun and an “acclahuasi”, a house prepared for the chosen girls. The Temple of the Sun has a long flight of stairs and passages made of carved stones from the area. At the end is a large flat terrace with a magnificent view of the sea with several islands of legendary significance. Pachacámac was the creator of the universe and life

itself but was not personified. Pachacámac, research indicates, was probably inhabited from 200 to 1533.



Our bus driver then took us to the private Gold Museum of Miguel Mujica Gallo, which has a collection of pre-Colombian artifacts made of gold, silver and sometimes copper. We saw rooms and rooms of Pre-Inca and Inca jewelry, death masks, knives used to make ceremonial sacrifices, weapons, trophy skulls and preserved bodies, as well as a room of pottery. Miguel bought his work from tomb robbers and sometimes by mistake he was sold fakes. After his death, his artifacts were organized and labeled for the public to enjoy.



This evening most of us had dinner together at a restaurant near the hotel where we celebrated the birthdays of Bernie Williams (today) and Osa Meekins on October 19. A restaurant staff member went out and bought a cake, put candles on it and a group of waiters sang "Happy Birthday" to Bernie and Osa, a pleasant surprise to all of us except for Gwen, who had made these special arrangements. *Marietta*

### Monday, October 12, 2009 Lima – Cuzco Lost luggage saga

Leave the Sonesta Posadas del Inca Hotel in Lima shortly after 8 am, to travel to the airport and 11:30 am flight to Cuzco. Our guide, Gennardo, eases our way to the check-in counter, things go smoothly and I'm issued a boarding pass. However looking more closely at the pass I notice it's been issued to a Jose Sendano (initials same as mine). I explain the situation to Gennardo & back we go to the check-in counter, the agent issues a new pass in my name, but the baggage ticket is not changed because we're both going to Cuzco - or so he thought.



About an hour later we land in Cuzco, I go to baggage claim area but the bag is not there. I run to the lost luggage counter and explain my situation, the girl immediately contacts the plane, but it's on the runway ready for take off and won't stop. Then the girl informs me that I must report this to Pablo, when I arrive at his station, I





find about 10 people ahead of me and Pablo is nowhere to be found! The Canadians in front of me say their luggage has been lost for 4 days. Finally I ask the tour guide if she'll send someone to handle this problem, we can't keep the whole group waiting. Bus takes us to the Terra Andina Hotel to check in and another guide arrives to lead us on the scheduled tour of the Plaza and Cathedral



End of saga. Luggage was found and deposited in my room at the Terra Andina Hotel. When we returned to the hotel on Thursday, Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>, the bag was there with intact contents and tagged with a MIA label. *Jean*

Today, we said goodbye to Lima and once again we found ourselves on our way to the Lima airport.

We were all very excited about finally going to **Cuzco**. The question in most of our minds was “Would the altitude pills work?” Yes, would be the answer for most of us.

After retrieving our luggage and finding our tour representative, we relaxed on our private motor coach. Our guide gave us very interesting information about the area and pointed out highlights of the city of Cuzco, the oldest continuously inhabited city in the western hemisphere.

We checked into the Terra Andina Hotel, a first class hotel in the historic district of the former capital of the Inca Empire. We could hardly wait to go out exploring the charming Plaza San Pedro which was said to be only a few blocks away but more like five or six blocks. On our walk (downhill) we were able to see the Cathedral on the main square and several churches including the Santa Clara & San Francisco Churches. In the Eiffel designed San Pedro Market Square, with its delightful combination of Inca and Colonial architecture, you could eat and buy anything Peruvian you would want in the many stores about the square. Then, it was the walk back to the hotel. (UPHILL and now what seemed to be a mile.)



Dead tired and after a large Peruvian meal, we went back to the hotel to reorganize our luggage so that we could just take a small bag with enough clothes for three days to our next destination. The hotel stored the rest.

ALL IN ALL, this was a great travel day. *Gwen Deas*

## **Tuesday, October 13, 2009 Cuzco - Yucay**

We awoke to a wonderful breakfast buffet at the Terra Andina Hotel in Cuzco: Eggs, tamales, cereals, lots of fruit and juices, and the widely popular Coca Tea. We had repacked our belongings – taking a small bag on the bus,

leaving the bigger bags at the hotel and with our guide, Mel, set off on our trip through the Sacred Valley.

We started with Sacsayhuaman, the large Inca fortress above Cuzco. Astonishing. The



stones making up the fortress were so large and fit together so perfectly that it was hard to imagine the work effort that made the place – and the many more places we were about to see - all without our

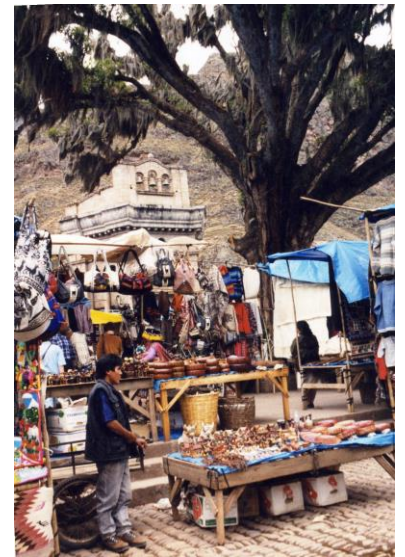


modern technology. On the

same hillside was a Jesus statue similar to the one above Rio which was given by the Arab-Palestinian community.



On to Pisac, an hour away from Cuzco, with a market fair of handicrafts and jewelry. Then on to Kenko ruins – a temple and ceremonial square, where modern day Incas still make offerings to Mother Earth. Puca Pucara, the Red Fortress with its storehouses and beautiful landscapes.



We then traveled along the Urubamba River with corn growing along its banks to Pesqo, where there was lots of shopping in the marketplace, empanadas and sweet breads at the bakery, musical instruments, alpaca sweaters. Lots of good shopping.

Still traveling along the river, we came to Arco Iris del Piante Restaurant and Garden. What a great buffet that was.



We had complimentary Pisco Sours and an array of fine salads and typical foods and extraordinary confections.

Later that afternoon found us in Ollantaytambo – ruins of terrace upon terrace all the way up a mountain. Climb, Climb, Climb. Some had to wait in the



middle of the ascent. There was an incomplete temple area at the top and access to even higher structures, which we chose not to climb. The view was fantastic. The effort that went into building and maintaining these places seems unimaginable. (The Incas had no concept of “Free Time”). The temple and growing places were other-worldly.

The day ended at Casa San Blas Boutique Hotel in Yucay: no phone, no TV, but a beautiful spot along the Urubamba where there was good food, rest, and thousands of stars in the night sky before the wake-up knock the next morning to get the train. *Joe & Bridget Kasinskas*



By 8:30 am we are up, have breakfast and leave the Terra Andina Hotel in Cuzco, taking with us only small bags with essentials for 3 days - rest of luggage is left at the hotel awaiting our return on Thursday. The guide takes us to the ruins of Kenko, Puca-pucara, Tambomachay and Sacsayhuaman fortress - latter is a huge site, still being evacuated, where she points out giant pillow-shaped stones put together without mortar and weighing more than 100 tons.

Reboarding the bus we are driven to the vast open market in the village of Pisac. Our group quickly disappears into the colorful market where we purchase sweaters, T-shirts, jewelry and other handicrafts. Following the shopping spree we're driven to a nice restaurant overlooking the Urubamba river where we enjoy a buffet lunch complete with complimentary Pisco Sours!!



After lunch we are bused to Ollantaytambo, a fortress which overlooks the valley and necessitates a climb which Bernie and I elect not to do. The 12,000ft. Altitude affects both of us with tingling and numbness of fingers & toes, difficulty breathing etc. The rest of the group made the trek but most found it difficult.

From Ollantaytambo the bus takes us through rugged countryside to the Urubamba Boutique Lodge in Yucay which is a lovely spot overlooking the Urubamba River - the front lawn is filled with flowers and the rear of the lodge backs down to the rushing stream. What a great place to relax and enjoy nature. Marietta and I go outside after dark to view the sky where there is little ambient light, but unfortunately there were too many clouds saw only two stars. Retire early anticipating a 4 am wake up call tomorrow!! *Jean*

### **Wednesday, October 14, 2009 Machu Picchu**

4 am wake up call - breakfast at 4:45 am - and leave the lovely Urubamba Lodge at 5:15 and driven to Ollantaytambo train station to board the Vista Dome train for Aguas Calientes at 7:10. It's a spectacular ride through the Sacred Valley following the course of the Urubamba River arriving in the Machu Picchu village station around 8:30 am. At this point we transfer to buses which take us up the mountain to the entrance to Machu Picchu "The Lost City of the Incas". The verdancy of this entire mountainous area is impressive it's a rain forest with much vegetation - orchids, ferns, bamboo, bromeliads etc.



Machu Picchu is overwhelming - a magnificent tribute to the Inca's ingenuity - because it's difficult to imagine a more inaccessible and inhospitable spot - little wonder that the Spanish never found it and it lay hidden for more than 400 years until Hiram Bingham discovered it in



1911. Peruvians commonly refer to it as the 7<sup>th</sup> Wonder of the World, the stonework and engineering feats are truly without parallel even in the modern world - all of this created by a people with no written language in an earthquake prone region which receives 70 to 80 inches of rainfall per year. It is situated on ridge between Machu Picchu, Huayna Picchu and Una Picchu mountains, falling sharply off to the Urubamba River far below. Our guide points out the Gate of the Sun where the Inca Trail from Cuzco empties into Machu Picchu, and we start a fairly strenuous walk through the site, climbing up



exterior stone staircases without hand rails at 8,000ft. The city is laid out in sectors divided by stone walls - green farm areas, storage areas, areas reserved for the elite, nobles and kings. It is probable that the site was used for religious as well as astronomical and observatory purposes. The infrastructure of the complex is impressive; the Incas laid out terraces following the contours of the land, & even used stone canals to channel water to the fountains in the buildings where it was used.

By 12:30 we've finished the tour and



proceed to the Sanctuary Lodge (near the tourist entrance) where we are given a nice buffet luncheon. After lunch most of the group return to Aguas Calientas by bus, but Marietta and I walk around the area searching for the site from which Lars had taken a picture of Machu Picchu. Unable to



find the spot and realizing it must be some distance down the mountain, we hop on the bus and return to the El Santuario Hotel where we check in. Later we take a walk, an uphill trek, to the village to explore, change money, buy postcards, water bottle holders, and I purchase a pair of socks, then we walk back to the hotel to meet the rest of the group and return to the village for dinner. Exhausted fall into bed by 10 pm! *Jean*



Machu Picchu! We did it!!! For some the climb was difficult, but every one was up to the challenge.

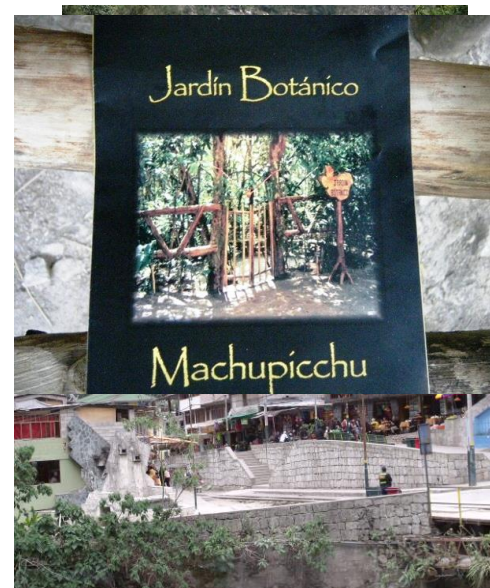
Machu Picchu's size, setting and history can only be appreciated first hand. The physical challenge of building the town was awe inspiring, and was accomplished with human hands and backs. Because of our excellent guide's knowledge and respect for the Incas, I now know quite a bit about the Inca history, culture and architecture. *Dena*

**Thursday, October 15, 2009 Aguas Calientas - Cuzco**

Breakfast at 6:45 am, must check out of the El Santuario Hotel at 9 am. Hotel agrees to hold our luggage and transport it to the train station at 2:15 pm. Nine of us decide to hike to the Botanical Gardens and the Machu Picchu Museum, follow the street in front of the hotel which



leads to Machu Picchu. Takes us less than our hour to find the garden and museum, pay an entrance fee of \$8 - museum is excellent displaying many artifacts from Machu Picchu and a good short movie on the excavations. Afterwards we stroll through the gardens, most of the orchids are not in bloom, it's a little too early, but we spot some



oncidiums and phalaenopsis among the arching ferns and blooming bougainvillea, poinsettias and bromeliads. Marietta, Bernie, and I decide to take the museum bus back to town while the rest of the group opt to walk, after waiting about 30 minutes someone conies to tell us we must walk because the bus is stuck at Machu Picchu!! We start on a long, hot trek, the tour



buses zip past covering us in clouds of dust, finally we meet the rest of the group and trudge uphill to Aguas Calientas for lunch where we are serenaded by a trio of musicians (guitar, drum and Peruvian flute) who



seem to follow us around - we've seen them twice before. After lunch we make our way to the train station, Bernie, Jim and I sneak into the market to purchase gifts - thanks to Jim the price is right!! Back in the station area we strike up a conversation with an Indian couple from Atlanta, Ga., try to convince them to join FF.



Vistadome train leaves on time, view is spectacular as we ride through the river valley. We are given food - sandwich, strawberry tart and drink - and entertained by a clown who performs in the aisles. This is followed by a fashion show, male and female models display beautiful alpaca sweaters, scarves, jackets and stoles at prices that are less than half of the US cost. Jim buys several things and Bernie tries but the size she needs isn't available. Gwen manages to sleep through all of this commotion!! In



Ollantaytambo we are met by bus driver who takes us back to Cuzco. We arrive back at the Terra Andina hotel after 7 pm. A nice surprise awaits me, my luggage, which was lost Monday, has been found and it's waiting in our room. Whew!! As we gather for



dinner we are informed that the entire dining room has been reserved for a large group which is expected within the hour, but we prevail on the staff to serve us. Since we're a small group, they hastily assemble a table for us alongside the main dining area. We present a small gift to Gwen as a token of appreciation for the excellent job she's done as ED. Immediately after dinner we fall into bed, must be up at 6 am tomorrow for the flight to Puerto Maldonado and the jungle!!

*Jean*

### Friday, October 16, 2009



Breakfast was scheduled for 6 am and we left the Terra Andina Hotel in Cuzco for the airport at 7:30am. Our flight from Cuzco to Puerto Maldonado left at 10:45am. Upon arrival we were bussed through the city- which seemed like a frontier town - the Wild West personified - to a building on the bank of the Madre de Dios River. At this time we were told that we must repack We were given green duffle

bags and instructed to pack only necessities required for three days, all else must be left in

Puerto Maldonado. This caused some panic, People grumbled that they should have been informed in



Cuzco about this. In the hotel we would have had more time to pack. Also we were concerned about leaving our luggage in this loosely guarded place. The staff instructed us to select a pair of knee boots which we would need for the jungle trek. Within a half hour we boarded a large motorized canoe, and - since it was noon - we were given lunch which consisted of a tasty rice course wrapped in a banana leaf.



Crossing the Madre de Dios was a pleasant interlude - about 30 or 40 minutes - since it afforded a little respite from the clammy heat, and our tummies were full which helped. Once we landed we clumped up the steps to the Sandoval

Lodge trailhead, and set off in the heat of the day on our jungle



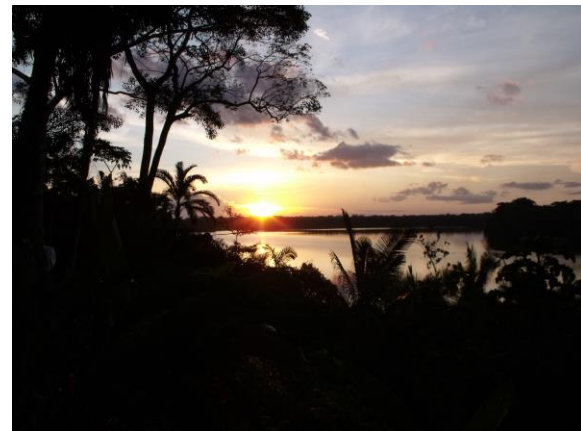
trek. The guide admonished us to touch nothing, to watch where we stepped and to stay on the trail - cautioning that some of the foliage and animals - fire ants, black mambas etc. - were dangerous. We slogged through the jungle clutching our water bottles - our duffle bags were brought by cart - stopping to wipe our sweaty brows, rest and gulp water. About 21/2 hrs later, we finally reached a canal where a catamaran canoe



awaited us. Two young oarsmen paddled the boat slowly across a lovely small quiet lake to the Sandoval Lake Lodge situated at the top of a series of steps leading from the edge of the water.



Carved out of the jungle the building was not intrusive, consisted of a reception area, including bar and lounge space, next to a large dining room next to a string of 30?? comfortable double rooms with bath. The rooms fronted on a veranda which ran the length of the building, a heavily thatched roof covered



the structure which was elevated about a foot from the jungle floor. We collapsed in our rooms for a much needed rest until 5:30 pm, then Delores, our young multi-lingual guide, lead us on a discovery walk around the grounds of the lodge we sighted a tarantula, leaf-cutter ants, katydids, grasshoppers, frogs and a small snake . Back in the lodge we devoured an excellent dinner while Delores explained the schedule for tomorrow. Quickly we retreated to our rooms, enshrouded in mosquito netting we slumbered through the night anticipating the 5:30 am wake up call !! Jean



## Saturday, October 17, 2009 Lake Sandoval

Awake at 5:30 am in Sandoval Lake Lodge, raining heavily but briefly and stops as we assemble to take the catamaran (actually 2 canoes paddled by 2 men) around the lake, in this early morning hour we spot many varieties of birds - herons, anhingas, hoatzins, wood rails, yellow billed terns, kingfishers, parrots, cormorants, anis, green ibis, gallinules, and flycatchers as we drift slowly



along the lake shore. After several hours we return to the lodge for breakfast, meet at 10 am for a medicinal plant tour in the area surrounding the lodge. The guide points out many trees & plants used by the natives to cure various illnesses, quinine tree, ironwood tree, strangler fig, etc. Later we hear a talk about the production of Brazil nuts. Like black walnuts, Brazil nuts grow in pods which fall from



the tree when ripe. Since the floor of the jungle may also harbor snakes, of which the bushmaster is the most dangerous, long sticks with metal prongs are used to gather the nuts. After drying the pods are split by special machetes and the nuts are separated out. A sizeable portion of the local economy is derived from the production of Brazil nuts.



After lunch we watch a video about the jungle, the native people, the animals etc. Enjoy a siesta until 4:30pm when we troop out to the paddle catamaran & set off to find the giant river otters which have dens on the west side of the lake. We watch them for some time and also see howler monkeys in the trees overhead. As we watch the spectacular sunset and wait for darkness to fall, we paddle to the opposite side of the lake. Here we search for black caimans - the largest Crocidilians in the western hemisphere - some as large as 20ft.



Employing flash lights we can spot red reflections from the





eyes of the reptiles. To add to the excitement, we manage to run aground and must shift weight to free the hull stuck in the mud. Hooray - it works and a short time later we return to the lodge and dinner. Anticipating the trek out of the jungle tomorrow morning, we enshroud ourselves in mosquito netting and retire early!!!! *Jean*



The Jungle, Sandoval Lodge  
We stayed in an eco lodge on



Lake Sandoval.

The wild life was wonderful—beautiful native birds like the zebra striped herons, black and white cormorants, giant otters, and piercing eyed gators. Our guide who was raised in the jungle pointed out the wealth of medicinal plants such as the garlic tree used for asthma and arthritics, and industrial plants like the fish tale palm used to construct roofs—its fronds repel water.

It was too bad that most of the group was uncomfortable in such a rustic setting. It was a bit buggy though; I walked out of the jungle with at least 80 chigger bites. The itch went away, but the memories have stayed. *Dena*

### **October 18 Lake Sandoval – Puerto Maldonado - Lima**

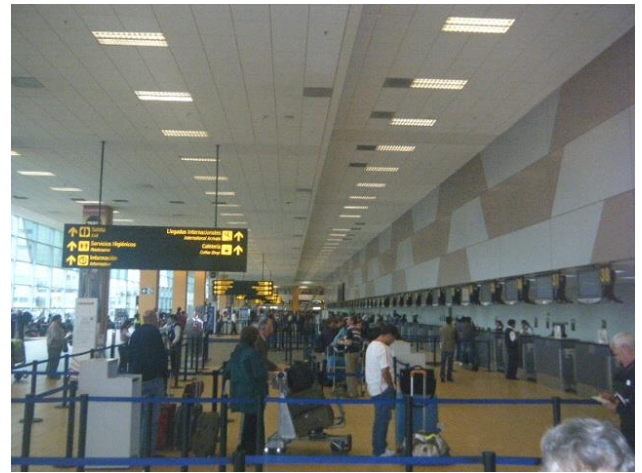
After an early breakfast at the lodge, we left by 7 AM by canoe to go to the other side of the lake for the 2 mile trek out of the jungle. A walk that took us more than 2 hours during the heat of the day going into the jungle now only took 45-50 minutes coming out. We were surprised to find that most of the huge puddles along the path had partially or completely dried up.



One interesting observation: because it was morning, the cool part of the day, and because the water holes were dried up, there were fewer butterflies congregating on the path. On the way in two days 2 days ago, it was the complete opposite, an extravagant sight. Pools of rain water just covered with all sizes, shapes and hues of colored butterflies, drinking to survive the heat of the day.

Our jungle experience ended here. We went by motorboat for a 35 minute ride on the Madre de Dios River (Mother of God) to Puerto Maldonado where we boarded a bus to pick up the rest of our stored luggage and then head for the airport to begin our trip home. Unfortunately we didn't have a chance to change our clothes from the jungle. Some of us were probably harboring fleas (or some

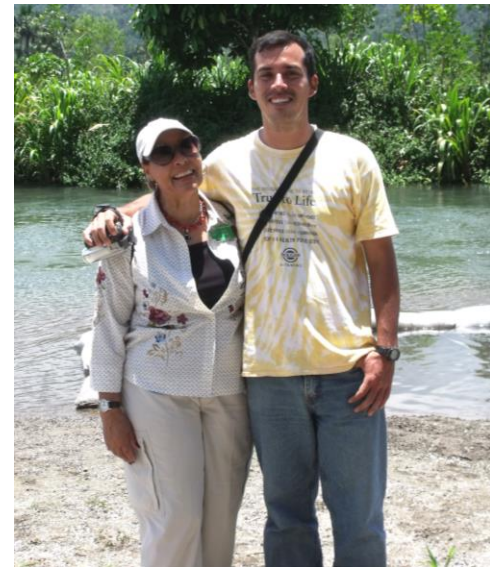
other critters that aren't affected by DEET) from the jungle in our clothes and began itching in places not proper to scratch in the airport. We left Puerto Maldonado at 12:45 PM and by the time we arrived in Lima at 3:30 PM, more of us had mysterious itchy bites. We experienced life in the jungle in more ways than one. It was an awesome experience! *Marietta*



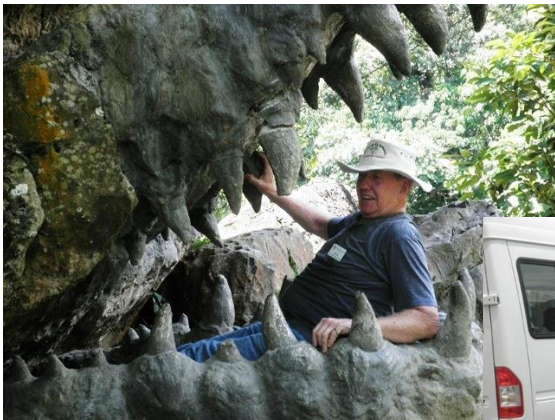
This was day one of our two day trek back to New Jersey. We were up early in the morning. Some of us got up earlier than others (thanks, Gwen). Much of our time was spent sitting at the airport waiting for the midnight flight from Lima to Miami. Several people were doing last minute shopping in the duty free shops while the rest of us were content to read, talk or sleep (or maybe all of the above). *Bernie*



My travel to Peru was the best. My host family was very gracious and it was fun talking Spanish with them since the husband did not speak English. The group from New Jersey was fun.



The visit of the attractions and Machu Picchu was very interesting. The group from Peru was very well organized and all was well. *Gigi Long*



I've traveled all over as a tourist but I was worried about staying in someone's home. The homestay turned out to be what I enjoyed the most. *Jim Dill*



## Hosts and Ambassadors



Gwendolyn Deas & Dorita Vda. De Vasquez



Jim Dill & Guillermina Garcia



Osa Meekins, Enith Angulo Tafur & Hugo Arevalo



Petronila Solorzano & Esau Hidalgo  
Joe & Bridget Kasinskas



Anita Linares, Gigi Long & Humberto Meza



Faustino Hidalgo Jean Sedar  
Rosa Santillan Cisneros & Marietta Loercher



Itala Lucy Vega Paredes, Tedy Sanchez  
& Bernie Williams



Lionel Flores, Marina Acosta de Flores & Bruce Cutler



Dena Wild, Lita Isabel Grandez &  
Abner Barzola



Cecy, Gwen Deas(ED) & Juan Jose Cardenas (ED)



Small Group Dinner at Juan & Cecy's

