

Maggie's Machu Picchu

By Maggie Beyer

As I reminisce on all my vacations, I can't find too much hell to write about. I was a traveling journalist for the *Beacher Magazine* for over 15 years. I traveled to India, China, Peru and most of Europe, just to name those most etched on my memory.

Let me share three excerpts from a 19-page article written upon my return from Machu Picchu:

"The Lost City of the Incas, high in the Peruvian Andes, has been a place veiled in mystery since its discovery in 1911 by Hiram Bingham. It's been called the greatest archeological site in the Americas, tweaking the imagination, because, like Stonehenge, its name has become a synonym for the unsolved and unknown. This citadel is the last city of refuge for the Incas as Spanish invaders drove deeper into their empire.

"As my touring group passed through the stone portal, the first site of the panoramic crescent of the carved granite buildings and terraces was indeed awesome, saddled astride a ridge between two mountains 12,000 feet above sea level with the Urubamba Canyon's roaring river snaking below. When Bingham wrote of his discovery back at Yale, he said, 'Would anyone believe what I have found?'... and it has astounded visitors ever since.

"Most travelers drawn to this place believe with Bingham that it was an important center for worship and ceremonies from the classical Inca period, ending the tradition of Andean cultures in 1532 that had stretched back over 3,000 years. Of the 163 bodies found in its cemetery, 150 were women, and Bingham believed that the last occupants were women of the sun and keepers of the temple rituals."

My trip to Machu Picchu required great stamina for long walks, hikes and a lot of deep breathing since we were several thousand feet above sea level.

There were many opportunities for things to go wrong. But as you can hear in my words this was not a vacation from hell but one that took me close to Heaven!