

Local author of 'Stone Offerings: Machu Picchu's Terraces of Enlightenment' to appear at Earth Song Books Sept. 5

By Diane Y. Welch

Mike Torrey, local architectural photographer and world traveler, has recently released a photo essay book which captures the beauty and mystique of the ancient Peruvian site of Machu Picchu. On Saturday, Sept. 5, from 11 a.m. through 2 p.m., he will be signing copies of his book titled, "Stone Offerings: Machu Picchu's Terraces of Enlightenment" at Earth Song Books in Del Mar.

The book, published in May through Torrey's own imprint, Lightpoint Press, contains a collection of over 100 photographs that have captured the unique nature of this enigmatic site that for hundreds of years has awed visitors.

Torrey first visited the site in June 2007, through his affiliation with San Diego's New School of Architecture. He had taught classes in architectural photography there for a couple of semesters and when he learned of a proposed trip to Machu Picchu, planned to coincide with the summer solstice, he was eager to go along.

"By the time I found out about it I only had about five weeks to prepare for the visit and there were only three days to photograph. But during the trip I was truly hooked," said Torrey in a recent interview. The trip was also about exploring architecture in Lima and Cuzco, he added. "I didn't go to Machu Picchu expecting this book to come out of it but at the end of the trip I met the man who had started the Yantalo Peru Foundation, and he asked me if I would be willing to collaborate to help raise funds to build his clinic. So I agreed that he could use my images to help raise funds for his organization, and that's how the idea for a book came about."

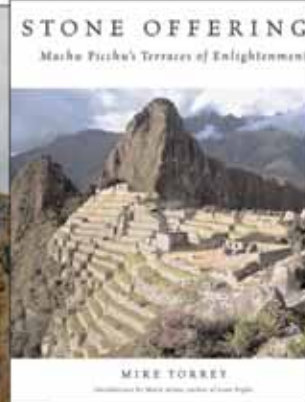
Of interest is that two of the students from the New School of Architecture stayed on in Yantalo to design the clinic for the foundation, said Torrey. A return to Machu Picchu in time for the winter solstice allowed Torrey to spend four days taking additional photographs to complete the book.

A passion for architectural photography evolved from Torrey's general interest in photography. About 12 years ago he had the opportunity to work as an assistant for an LA-based architectural photographer, Robert Berger. "I helped him do a book on Sacred Spaces, which featured historic houses of worship in Los Angeles," Torrey recalled. This would serve as inspiration for Stone Offerings.

A native Californian, Torrey grew up in Arcadia. The Torrey Pines tree is named for a distant cousin of his, John Torrey. His interest in photography started in college; Torrey attended San Diego State University, gaining an undergraduate degree in marketing,



Mike Torrey



then took an MBA at the University of San Diego.

"When I got my MBA I took an aptitude test which indicated that I tended to be subjective in personality. So from a left brained focus, I then directed myself more into right brain activities as I am more visually oriented, and good at problem solving which

architectural photography is all about." The lighting, the connecting of spaces, the three dimensional thinking, are all aspects of the work that appeal to Torrey and comprise the challenge of the work. "And this fits in with my left brain/right brain tendencies," he said.

Machu Picchu first came into Torrey's consciousness when he was in elementary school. "It was there and had been on my list of places to visit for a long time." So the trip and the book fulfilled a long held dream.

Former book editor for the *Washington Post*, Marie Arana, now a freelance writer, penned the book's introduction. It was through her connections that Torrey was able to firm a presentation date at the Smithsonian for Nov. 16, 2009. A few days prior to that event, Torrey will appear at the Library of Congress, on Nov. 13.

To promote the book Torrey is also touring locally doing book signings and slide shows. Torrey, who is on the steering committee of the Friends of San Diego Architecture, is not exactly sure what his next book will be or what the next subject will be, but he does look ahead to future projects through Lightpoint Press.

In closing Torrey said, "I called the book Stone Offerings because I felt that Machu Picchu wasn't necessarily just an archaeological relic but that it also has something to tell us about our own built environment, that the Incas and us each had the same choices to make about what we build. The decisions that they made, I believe, can inform us in the decisions that we make about our own environment."

To find out more about Torrey's book, visit his website at www.stoneofferings.com To find out more about Mike Torrey visit www.miketorrey.com. Earth Song Books is located at 1440 Camino Del Mar in the village of Del Mar. Torrey will be appearing and signing books from 11 a.m. through 2 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 5. There will also be large framed, signed prints for sale.