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Machu Picchu book fulfills and enlightens

By **RICHARD L. CARRICO**
For the North County Times

In April 1913, National Geographic devoted an entire issue of its prestigious journal to a newly discovered archaeological wonder. Known to few very non-Peruvians beyond the academic halls of Yale, Machu Picchu burst on the world in all its grandeur. It would be almost a decade until Howard Carter discovered the tomb of King Tut, igniting another archaeological frenzy and shifting the public's attention from Peru to Egypt.

Hiram Bingham rediscovered Machu Picchu in 1911, and the intrepid archaeologist furthered the removal of treasures and relics begun by the German Augusto Berns in the late 1800s. Unlike Berns' looted treasure, which found its way into European antiquities markets, Bingham filled the archives and museum at Yale University with more than 5,000 relics. He also published ex-

tensively on his findings and brought the little-known Inca empire, the most extensive in the New World, to the readers of the time.

Built by the still-mysterious Inca in the late 1400s, Machu Picchu rivals the Egyptian and Mexican pyramids, the Taj Mahal and the Cathedral of Notre Dame. In 1983, Machu Picchu joined other international cultural treasures when UNESCO listed the mountain wonder as a World Heritage Site.

As stunningly photographed by San Diego-based architectural photographer Mike Torrey, Machu Picchu, the "Ancient Peak," is virtually brought to life. In his "Stone Offerings: Machu Picchu's Terraces of Enlightenment," Torrey provides high-quality images of the buildings, terraces, observatories and aqueducts meticulously carved from nature.

Sitting at an altitude of 8,000 feet above sea level, Machu Picchu served as a

STONE OFFERINGS

★★★★

AUTHOR Mike Torrey

PUBLISHER Lightpoint Press

BINDING Hardcover

PAGES 143 in a large format with more than 100 plates

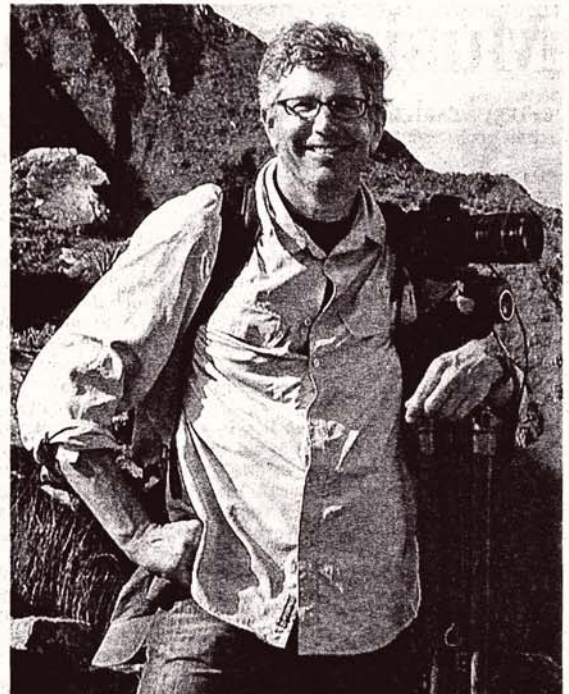
PRICE \$40

sanctuary and astronomical focal point for high-ranking Incas. Today, more than 2,000 people a day (on average) trod the ancient stone paths of Machu Picchu, making the task of capturing the majesty and serenity of the place daunting. Yet Torrey has conjured up the near-impossible: There are few signs of humans or their modern presence. When they do appear as shadows or in the background, human images add to the surreal mood, not detract from it.

By focusing on the architectural wonders of mortarless stone masonry, perfectly engineered aqueducts and terraced gardens, the photographer escorts his viewer into his world and into the ancient world. Torrey is a photographer who clearly understands the visual magic of light and texture. By photographing Machu Picchu in the light of the summer and winter solstice and from dawn to dusk, Torrey captures the heavens and earth as few others have.

The bilingual introduction by Marie Arana, author of "Lima Nights," is acutely insightful and sensitive. When Arana opens with "We humans envy to touch the sky" she speaks to the lofty relationship between humans and the heavens that seem to touch the very stones at Machu Picchu. In closing, she writes "through Torrey's lenses we see Machu Picchu as few mortals can. We see its miracles through the eyes of gods."

Believing that the care-



Mike Torrey traveled to Peru to take the photos for his new book. Courtesy photo

fully composed photographs speak for themselves, captions are kept to a minimum and even when used are short descriptions. A fantastic overview shot of the Inca complex presented at the rear of the book is keyed into a listing of the major architectural features that appear on the facing page. Readers seeking lengthy descriptions and the narrative of Machu Picchu must look elsewhere — and that is not criticism.

This finely crafted book is far more than just a coffee-table book or glossy eye candy. Although, for certain it belongs to be out where it can be seen and lovingly caressed by the eye. For readers who cannot make the trek 50 miles northwest of Cusco, Peru, "Stone Offerings" is the next-best thing. Through the

evocative photographs one can almost feel the near-constant cloudy mists that swirl overhead, smell the mountain flowers, and hear the ancient chants rebounding off the perfectly shaped and polished blocks. In this wonderful book, Torrey seems to be channeling Machu Picchu's first serious chronicler, Bingham, who modestly noted that, "I had a good camera and the sun was shining."

Mike Torrey will speak and sign books at Foundation Yoga in Solana Beach on Friday.

Richard Carrico of Ramona teaches in the Department of American Indian Studies at San Diego State University and is author of "Strangers in a Stolen Land: Indians of San Diego County From Prehistory to the New Deal."

