

CALYPSO LOG

SEPTEMBER 1982

A PUBLICATION OF THE COUSTEAU SOCIETY



ONE COLD DAY OF BEAUTY AND DUST

Notes from the Journal of Dick Murphy

When the Amazon "Land Team" first began to follow the source of the great river from its Andean origin down to lush jungle, Society biologist Dick Murphy was along to study water quality, to observe the ecological systems of the headwaters, and to photograph the mission. What follows are photos from his camera and entries taken directly from his personal log. The location, the Río Apurímac in Peru, is the source of the Amazon. The notes cover the team's experiences during one "typical" day (none are alike, of course), providing a unique glimpse at expedition life. They are rendered here in the brief form in which Murphy jotted them down late in the evening of May 31st, while bundled in blankets and still anxious for a warm bath.

OPPOSITE: Ice crystals adorn streambank near Cous-teau team's campsite.

May 31, 1982

Tres Canyones, Along the Río Apurímac

0500 Awaken to music of Inca flutes from Dominique Sumian's tape recorder. Sooo cold, feet frozen all night, frost over everything. Inside tent, breath has condensed to ice crystals. Next to me, Jean-Michel stretches, bumps potato-chip-sounding tent, and I'm showered with crystals.

0515 Dressed and out as others emerge from tents. As usual, Dominique already up, has breakfast underway. Scene: bulky little bodies exhale steam, stomp feet in slow motion, and clap gray gloves. Across river, sun hitting top of mountain above Inca ruins.

0545 Great breakfast: eggs (3 min. exactly), hot chocolate, local bread and butter, apricot marmalade. World looking better, warming up. Take down tent with Jean-Michel; goes quickly after 11 consecutive nights of camping.

0600 Help clean dishes. Louis Prezelin washing dishes in icy river water; I rinse, hands burning with cold. How is *he* doing it?

0630 Dominique assembling Zodiac, kayakers getting equipment ready, Jean-Paul Cornu and Louis preparing cameras, Guy Jouas organizing recording equipment, Jean-Michel pulling diving suits from our huge yellow truck named *Amarillo*.

0700 Load kayaks and equipment on jeep. Looks like tiny circus car from which emerge abundance of clowns.

0730 Circus car leaves with kayakers and film crew. Will go up road to Tres Canyones, where three canyons

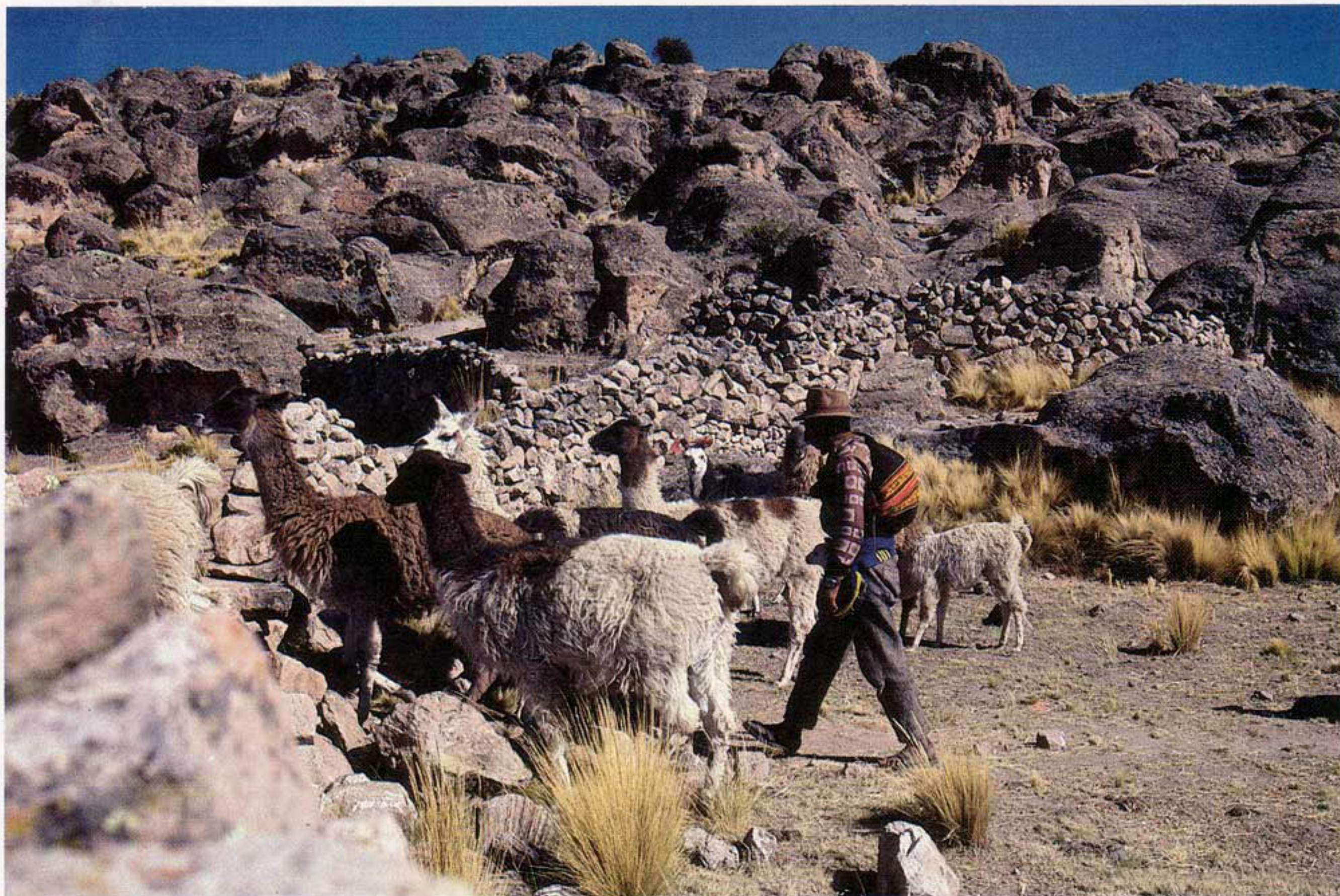
join, to film kayaks and Zodiac coming down river and through rapids. Should be beautiful. Jeep will return for Jean-Michel, Dominique, and me. Can procrastinate no longer, time to wash and shave. Push away ice which extends out two feet from riverbank—sooo cooold! Shaving cream frozen. Reorganize personal stuff—last clean shirt and pants. Had better hit civilization soon or will look like derelict. Everything thoroughly dusty.

0800 Organize still photography equipment, clean lenses, get more film from *Amarillo*. Enter data on film log sheets, tedious but necessary. Jean-Michel and Dominique fighting dive suits to put them on: two funny little men waddling around in big black suits. What must the local people think as they pass by? Jean-Michel wearing his hand-woven, natural-dyed *chullo* (Peruvian hat), a gift from llama herder when we climbed Mount Mismi. Absolutely only time he takes it off is to put on and take off dive suit.

0830 Jeep returns. We load equipment and plastic bottles for water analysis. Off in a cloud of dust. Narrow bumpy and rocky one-lane dirt road. Meet llamas—wait while Indian hisses them off road. Puddles still frozen; beautiful icicles hang from all moist ledges. Pass three clean streams—must get water samples downstream to compare to turbid, mine-leached, silt-laden main river.

0900 Arrive at Tres Canyones—very picturesque! Louis and I will shoot from high riverbank. Jacques Ertaud, the director, is a study in boundless enthusiasm, rapid words, and gesticulations. Can hear him from here—300 yards away. Old woman sits on bluff across river, with llamas grazing in already harvested fields. To right, Apurímac comes down





LEFT: The land team, in Amarillo, bouncing over dusty roads of the Andes.

ABOVE: Quechua Indians herding llamas are constant sight in rockstrewn altiplano.

OPPOSITE: Kayakers Alejandro (Chando) Gonzalez Choza and David Ridley, who joined Cousteau team for upper Apurímac trip, negotiate a rapid. Apurímac features some of the most treacherous whitewater in the world.

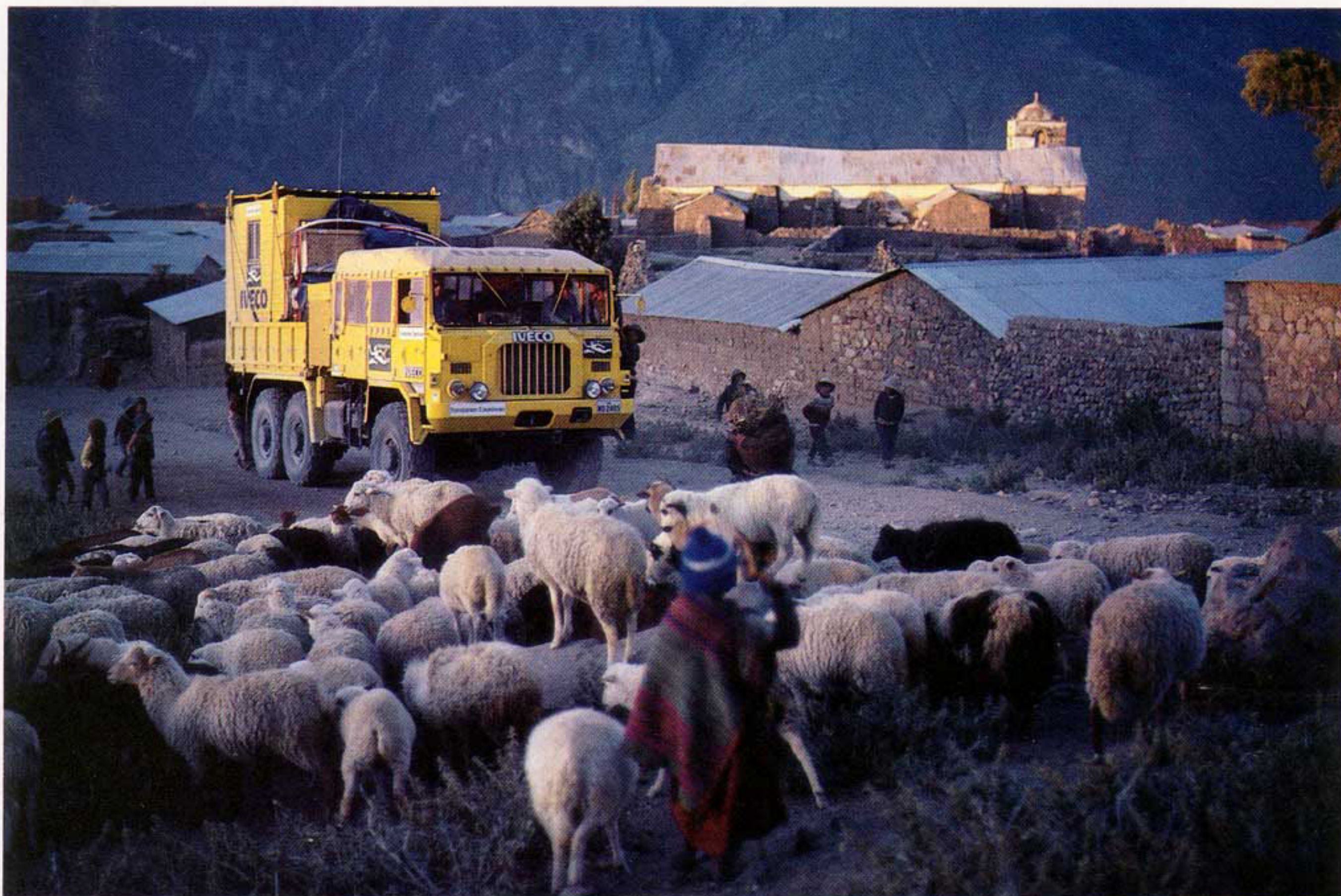
from Cailloma. Nice colors: red rocks, clear sky, green water. Warm finally—even my toes. Far to the right, a brown and gray tributary dumps its silt from a silver mine. I go down to get water samples in bottles from both rivers. Trees here are called Quenuay—the national tree, protected. First indigenous trees seen so far. Peruvian terrain to here has been too high or too dry. Two women cross river near me, lift dresses high, gingerly step on round cobbles. Looks difficult. I try, make it, put shoes on and continue.

1000 Jean-Paul is filming kayakers from Zodiac. I shoot stills of scenery and boats in distance; change from 24mm to telezoom for variety shots. Ready for final run. Kayaks will continue down river and return to camp. Should be exciting for them. Go! Looks great: red and yellow kayaks dancing around lethargic gray Zodiac as Jean-Michel and Dominique try to maneuver it over shallow spots and around large rocks—looks difficult. They hit a big rock—Jean-Paul just about goes in. Find out

later he hit his head on camera and has blood all down his nose.

1100 Down to Zodiac; lots of talk, excitement. Lug gray monster up cliff. Jean-Paul, with camera, like a mountain goat climbing—strong, agile, indefatigable. Louis, with heavy tripod, always ready, willing, and capable. Jacques, expounding on something with animation, full of ideas and comments. Guy, with recording equipment and headphones, completely competent, and the comic relief vital to maintenance of group's spirits. Dominique, hauling boat, Paul-Bunyon-like, calm, confident, with a twinkle. Jean-Michel, also hauling boat, enthusiastic, effective conductor orchestrating all aspects from smallest to largest, yet always has time for a bit of fun. Back to the circus act: boat on top of jeep, Louis in boat, Dominique on back bumper and rest of us in jeep with equipment, Jean-Michel driving. Dominique and Jean-Michel still in dive suits. What a sight, totally bizarre! Love to hear how locals





LEFT: Author Murphy collects water samples near Inca ruins along the Apurímac.

ABOVE: Amarillo at dusk approaches "a small brown city perched atop a brown hill surrounded by brown land..."

would describe all this. Back to bumpy, dusty road. All bet on time kayakers will reach camp. Times range from 45 min. to 1.5 hours. Meet truck loaded with local people off to weekly (Monday for some reason) market—all dressed up and excited. They chatter and wave while passing. As we continue, see more people going to "town"—thirty mud/rock buildings and a central square. Some mothers with babies wrapped in blanket on back. Barefoot boys. Young men on bicycles. One man on horseback. Shoes, for those who have them, are made of tire tread, with straps cut from innertube rubber. Stop at stream for water sample. Dominique grins through dust-covered rear window.

1200 Back to *Amarillo*. Lunch: local bread and cheese, sardines, Inca cola and aqua minerale, and fruit. All work while eating, talking and laughing, spirits are up. Good times: working together, mentally and physically stimulating, the way life should be. All look forward to exploring Inca ruins across river. Kayakers return in 55 min. I lose, Jean-

Michel wins a beer from each of us. He gloats. Kayakers wonder why all the fuss when they arrive.

1300 Off to Inca ruins called *Maucallacta*, meaning ancient place. Absolutely one of the most picturesque places I've ever seen. Rock walls connect circular, rock rooms—a labyrinth of walls, no ceilings. Inside, ground plowed by present Indians for agriculture; llamas and sheep graze everywhere in ruins. Influence of Spaniards in two rectangular buildings: in one, three small alcoves for figures of saints and Christ. On through ruins to exquisite *Chulpa*, cylindrical, silo-like Inca tomb. Stones fit flawlessly, about 30 feet high, 10 feet in diameter. Entrance open. Should I enter? Sacreligious? Will snakes lurk? Will a curse plague me later? If I don't, I'll miss an important experience. Here to explore and must do it. Head in first, body blocks light, absolutely black. Dimly lit, a bit spooky. Three small alcoves, probably for folded bodies. Wow. Here I am inside an

Inca tomb constructed hundreds of years ago by super craftsmen for people in a civilization I can only vaguely understand. Right here people lived, loved, and died. They probably had all the same human fears, desires, hopes as we...but what about the details: food, toys, sports, gods, personal comfort, war, daily work, hygiene, rituals, marriage? Feel like I'm sinking into my own world of thoughts. Feel isolated from real world outside. Shall I imagine further...What should I think about? I think I'll think about getting out. Climb up mountain. Another comic sight: below, two black invaders encased in rubber for cold-ocean diving enter maze of dry rock ruins.

1400 Jean-Michel and Dominique sprawled on backs in ruins (its been a long and fatiguing day) while Guy dissects his sound equipment searching for "bugs." Delay, then all resume exploring ruins.

1430 Return to *Amarillo*. Time to do my science. Unload my bottles, syringes, knee pads, data sheets, chemicals, mini-spectrophotometer, filters, plankton nets, and other essentials. Get Jean-Michel to stand in river, with plankton net in each hand, filtering for phyto- and zooplankton. Dominique fills my sample bucket. Measure temperature first, then others in order of which will change most with time: oxygen, ammonia, chlorophyll, (add preserving chemicals to plankton, iodine for phytoplankton, formalin for zooplankton), then pH, nutrients (preserve for later analysis), calcium, turbidity. Turbidity most dramatic. When Apurímac descended from high mountains it was very clear and full of red copepods. However, water from Cailloma silver mine merged—over 100 times more turbid—and completely changed character of Apurímac. Later, Hornillos River merged—very clear. What a contrast! Hornillos has lush aquatic vegetation, water bugs, fish, interesting phytoplankton. But Apurímac now gray, no plants, shallow green-brown scum, no apparent animal life, obviously low productivity due to poor light penetration. Here Apurímac about 10 times more turbid than clear tributaries entering it. Discussed with Jean-Michel significant impact of man here at beginning of Amazon. What other impacts will we see as we continue?

1530 Reload truck, and we are off in another cloud of dust. Sun descends behind canyon wall and cold begins again. Dominique and others have gone ahead in jeep to Yauri to get a hotel room for us. We bounce along. Valley opens to broad, dry plain—"potato land." Groups of people dig up potatoes, put in sacks. Kids play while parents work.

1700 Sun has set; black hills to west end sharply, wide pink rays stretch over our heads. Following large truck which kicks up great clouds of dust (as if we needed more dust). A small brown city lies perched atop a brown hill surrounded by brown land inhabited by brown people. We approach Yauri. Dare I hope for a shower. It's possible. Unlike Cailloma, Yauri has gas stations. I imagine: to wash my hair, to be clean, to soak my cracked

hands in warm water. We climb the hill and enter the maze of nondescript narrow streets, stopping at every power line to make sure the top of *Amarillo* does not snag it. As in every town, an entourage of small boys runs along with our strange yellow behemoth.

1800 I wonder if warm water is as paramount in the minds of others as in mine? We arrive—a dimly lit sign identifies our hotel. It doesn't look good, the chances of warm water. I push through a crowd of about 30 curious villagers to check out the hotel. Through the entrance (looks worse...) into patio. A single, exposed bathroom sink, a mirror, and a single faucet can mean only one thing. No bath, no shower, no warm water. My quest ends. Carry personal bags up flight of stairs in which each stair is of a different height (would hate to be blind here). Through a doorway which hits me at chin level into a room with one electric bulb, exposed electric wires connecting bulb to switch, ten very saggy beds, and burlap-covered ceiling.

1900 Off to dinner. What a surprise, a well-lit (two electric bulbs and one Coleman lantern) large room seats about thirty villagers who are talking, tending kids, eating happily, drinking beer. Dominique buys beer for all of us. Does that beer taste good! I can live a few more days without a real bath. It's great to drop into this setting—so foreign, yet so human. Life going on as it normally does. Nothing for tourists here except what I consider the best part of being a tourist—to see how other people, particularly country people, live their daily lives. Bread and beer keep us busy while a number of discussions develop: the filming activities of the day, plans for tomorrow, the truck, equipment, the people around us, the posters on the wall. As always, a considerable amount of kidding takes place. Guy flips a piece of bread across the table hitting Jean-Paul in the head. Conversation continues. The act is repeated. Jean-Paul gets up mechanically, walks over to Guy, who is looking the other way, picks up Guy and his chair, and bounces them off the floor five times. Guy, of course, objects with innocent indignation. Chicken soup, beef steak with fried egg on top, french fries, lettuce, rice, tomatoes fill us and, after coffee and sweet cakes, we return to the hotel.

2100 Sleeping bags spread on beds and we prepare to crash. Must be up at dawn to film kayaks and to do science. Some don our miner-type head lamps and write in journals or read, others talk quietly.

2200 Suddenly, a loud speaker blares out music! A woman's voice invites villagers to the local bar for drinks and dancing. What a racket! After a few firecrackers explode, a man takes over the harangue. The crew is jolted awake; a few groans are heard and some choice comments from Guy. Everyone laughs and we fall asleep again. After a day like this, after so many consecutive days like this, nothing could keep us awake for long. Bonne nuit!