

THE SAINT TIM'S TIMES

This month's newsletter is themed "Living Abroad". We're excited to hear and share the stories of Diane Gregg and Angela Mallette. We welcome more if you'd like to share!



Living In Peru

by Angela Mallette

In July 2001 my family moved from eastern Nevada to Peru, where my husband was a geologist at a gold mine. We landed in Lima around midnight and cleared customs. We were directed down a corridor towards a mass of people pressed behind a rope barrier. They were calling out and waving signs. I thought it was a political protest. It was the families and friends of disembarking passengers.

After a couple of days in Lima, we flew to the northern Andes town of Cajamarca. We bundled the kids and suitcases into a local taxi and...and the taxi wouldn't start. The driver opened the hood and fiddled with a few hoses. Then we were off to Banos del Inca, a small town about 4 miles away, where the company had arranged a house for us.

Our Peruvian adventure had begun.

My husband had worked in Peru for several months and had employed a Peruvian maid. Rosa met us at our new home, and even though she didn't speak English, we communicated fairly well with gestures and facial expressions. She was kind and taught me so much.

Schools in the southern hemisphere run from March to December, so Michael (age 8) and James (age 6) started right away at Davy College, a private school catering to ex-pat and Peruvian mining families. We'd been told that Davy was a bilingual school, but soon realized that ours were among the first non-Spanish speaking children enrolled.

We met an Australian family in a situation similar to ours, and then a couple of bilingual classmates and their families. The ex-pat community was a lifeline for community and support. Time went on, the boys began to learn Spanish, and more English speaking families arrived.

We didn't have a car. The men car-pooled in company trucks to the mine, about an hour away. The families relied on taxis and arranged routine transportation with a specific driver. Around 7:00, Marco picked up me and the boys, we dropped the kids at school, and then he took me home or wherever I needed to go. Around 2:00, he arrived to take me back to school for pick up. After a couple of years, Marco handled the school runs without me.

Banos had corner bodegas and a Mercado Centrale, but selection was limited and sanitation questionable. Most of my shopping was in Cajamarca. I went to the carniceria for meat, a queseria for cheese, Mercado Centrale for fresh produce and one of 3 "American" markets for pantry items. There were some canned goods and a few frozen foods, but nothing was guaranteed from week to week. The boys stopped saying "please buy..." and began to say "will you look for..." We used ultra-processed milk, washed fresh produce in a dilute Clorox solution, and used bottled water for brushing teeth and drinking.

I found most Peruvians to be warm and gracious, but a few resented our presence and the changes we signified. Sometimes we were overcharged, probably more often than we knew. One teacher said we made her life harder by paying too much and increasing inflation.

My husband was fluent in Spanish. I struggled, even though the company provided private lessons. If the kids or I needed to see a doctor, a company employee could accompany us and translate. Marco or Rosa helped when I floundered. I didn't understand everything they said, but I trusted them. On a trip to the US without my husband, the immigration official kept asking for documents although I had provided everything required. In my very best Spanish, I said I didn't know what else she wanted. She snarled "Why are you here if you don't speak the language!" before slamming stamps on our passports and waving us through.

But what an adventure!

Peru is a beautiful country with a rich history. We learned about the Incan empire and its 1532 conquest by Pizarro and the Spaniards just down the road in Cajamarca's Plaza de Armas. We visited Macchu Picchu and the Sacred Valley, flew over the Nazca lines, and floated on the Amazon where James caught a piranha. The lodge cooked it and I learned fried piranha tastes like...well like fried fish. I ate foods I'd never heard of. Some I loved, some not so much.

We saw parades, festivals, and celebrations. School programs were huge productions with elaborate costumes. Peruvian parties lasted late into the night, still going strong long after the wimpy ex-pats had gone to bed.

We got to know the families of Rosa and Marco, and how their lives differed from the Peruvians we met at the mine and school.

Michael and James lived and learned with children from other countries and cultures. Their friends came from Peru, Chile, Australia and Canada. They didn't all look the same, but they all liked Pokémon, Harry Potter and ice cream.

I made great friends from different countries. Our backgrounds and traditions differed, but we all wanted the same things...a safe place to live, a happy family and chocolate.

We had lived in Peru for 3 ½ years when the company transferred us back to the US in December 2004.

Michael and James hadn't wanted to go to Peru. Now it was home, and they didn't want to leave.

I had mixed feelings. Some days in Peru had been hard, even with our advantages of a good salary, the time to enjoy it and an employer that smoothed many of the rough spots.

But most days were good. I was grateful for the friends we'd made, the adventures we'd had, and the opportunity to witness life from different perspectives.

We boarded the plane and I took a last look at friends waving good-bye and the beautiful countryside. Time in Peru made my life richer. It's been 20 years and I still miss it.



A Year of Fellowship and Flowers: Life in The Netherlands

by *Diane Gregg*

With an emphasis of VE Day this month, my mind goes back to May 1980 and a re-enactment of 1945 when bombers from England flew over The Netherlands dropping not bombs, but loaves of bread to the starving people. The country came to a halt and everyone stopped what they were doing, cars pulled off the road, radios went silent, and there was a moment of complete silence and remembrance. What an experience. And one I still recall with deep emotion.

You may be wondering what I was doing there. Glad you asked. Dr. Spielberger, the professor I worked with at the time, was on sabbatical and spending the 1979-80 academic year at The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Social Sciences and Humanities (NIAS). His wife had remarked that she wasn't particularly excited as he'd be sharing a Secretary with several other Fellows also doing research. I laughingly noted they should take me, she came back and said "get a passport," and I did. Packed a couple of suitcases, bought a winter coat and boots (lived in Tampa, so...), packed the rest of my belongings in a couple of boxes, and off I flew. Actually saw an SST in flight; pretty cool.

NIAS is funded by the Dutch government and is essentially a think tank comprised of both international and Dutch scholars, some at the peak of their careers and some rising stars in their field. Located in a peaceful, tranquil setting in Wassenaar, a suburb of Den Haag, along a small canal (yes, there are canals everywhere), it was wonderful. Colorful grounds, warm, caring staff, and really interesting visiting Fellows. And the regular end-of-the-day sherry hours were pretty nice too! I loved it. The work day ended at 5:15 and anyone still in their office after that was American! Everyone else went home to families. They definitely understood work-life balance.

The Netherlands is very much as you probably picture it; very long winter nights, equally long summer days, canals, more color than imaginable in the spring as absolutely everything blooms, including the trees, miles and miles of tulips, hyacinth, and lilies, open-air flower market, open-air "everything" markets, sitting by the wild, gray North Sea sipping coffee, walking on the polders (dikes holding back the North Sea), frites and pickled herring from street vendors, small family parks in every neighborhood, and so much more.

However, there simply isn't space to cover it all. So, I'll just share two more of the many memories that truly impacted me.

One of the first things I did was find St. Luke and St. Philip Anglican Church in The Hague where I found a family of warm, amazing, loving, diverse individuals. Being Anglican there were friends from across the globe, including Turkey, The British Isles, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and elsewhere. Dr. Spielberg traveled frequently which afforded me ample opportunity to spend time with this family.

The first event involved my friend Hanney and her Mum. Hanney was from New Zealand as her parents had emigrated from The Netherlands following WWII. She had come back to spend a year getting to know extended family and her Mum had come back to visit her elderly mother, Hanney's grandmother. The three of us went to see *The Hiding Place*, the story of the Ten Boom family who had saved many Jewish people before being caught and sent first to prison and, then, to concentration camps. I'd read the book, *The Hiding Place* as well as numerous others by Corrie Ten Boom, so was interested to see the movie. It was very moving, but much of it took place in Schevingen where Hanney's Mom was from. Needless to say, her reaction was intensely emotional and I can't even imagine what reliving that time was like; my heart broke for her and her emotional response had a definite impact. (As an intriguing aside, walking home from the theatre was also my first view of the red light district at night. LOL)

The final experience was a trip up near Maastricht with several of the friends from church. We all piled into Simon's Citroen (the coolest car ever) and drove up into the countryside near town. We parked and hiked up through the woods where the sunlight filtering through the leaves created dappled patterns on the pathway. It was strangely silent, even though there was a small running stream along the way. It was lovely and tranquil and perfect until suddenly we walked out of the woods and into a meadow. It stretched as far as I could see with row upon row of plain white crosses. We'd reached the American cemetery. I didn't have a name for what I experienced that day but have since come to realize it was one of the "thin places". I've experienced that same awareness in other places that have been the site of great tragedy and death. One sweet act, according to my Dutch friends, is that each grave is adopted by a local family who tend to it as if it was their own. As I finish writing on this Memorial weekend, it is fitting that this should be a vivid memory of my experiences.

I could continue writing for pages (I haven't even touched on visiting London and Paris), but those are tales for another time. So I'll close by saying that anytime you have the opportunity to visit and integrate yourself into another culture, take the time to do so. You won't regret it! And thanks for the opportunity to relive an exciting and meaningful chapter of my life.