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News This Week

■ Institution to close

The 77-year-old Menlo Park Hardware says it will close at the end of the year. **PAGE 5**

■ Community responds

Local efforts to raise funds, remember victims of terrorists' attacks.

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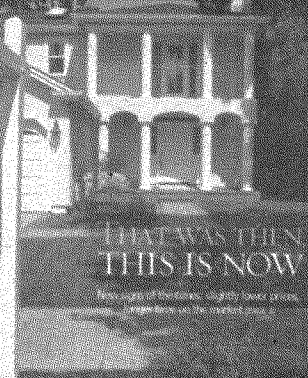
■ Money & Business

Coldwell Banker and Seville-Contempo are merging real estate operations and will operate under the Coldwell Banker name.

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Real Estate



Lower prices, longer time on the market are new signs of the times.

Ghosts in the Andes

Stanford team
probes pre-Inca
temple high in the
Peruvian Andes for
roots of ancient
jaguar cult

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ROOTS of RELIGION

In the high Andes, Stanford team digs temple complex for clues to ancient powerful cult 2,000 years before the Incas

BY MARION SOFTKY
Almanac Staff Writer



Courtesy John Rick

This pottery bird was discovered by John Kriewall of Atherton. It's a whistle that can still be blown.



Strombus shells from Ecuador, discovered in a gallery near the circular plaza, were carved as trumpets to be blown at ceremonies. Later in Lima, 12 of them were played for the first time in more than 2,000 years.

Below: Jaguar stalks toward the holy stairs in the ceremonial plaza of the Old Temple at Chavin de Huantar.



Chipping away at the hard dirt under the hot Andean sun, I sometimes forgot the ghosts that still seemed to haunt this once-holy temple.

The crouching jaguar, elegantly carved into a plaque gradually emerging from the dirt just feet away from me, evoked ancient rituals that must have taken place in this very plaza almost 3,000 years ago. Strange-costumed priests on the nearby steps would conduct weird rites, perhaps even sacrifices, accompanied by the squawking din of conch shells. In a tunnel just above the stairs, initiates, high on cactus juice and deafened by the reverberating roar of falling water, absorbed messages from the fanged oracle.

What a trip! Almost 40 archeologists and wannabes from Stanford spent several weeks in July and August digging at Chavin de Huantar, high in the Peruvian Andes. We were seeking answers in the ground to mysteries still surrounding the jaguar cult that helped launch the great civilizations of the Andes more than 2,000 years ago.

"They were constructing a belief system at the same time they were constructing a temple," says John Rick of Menlo Park, chairman of the Department of Anthropological Science at Stanford, who was leading his seventh season excavating at Chavin de Huantar. "We are trying to understand from their temple what their actions were, what their strategy was. How do people establish power, not by force but by credibility?"

"That's what Chavin was all about."

Everything we excavate talks about that."

Huge and still largely unexcavated, Chavin de Huantar has inspired awe since the days of the Spanish conquerors – and before. It is one of three UNESCO World Patrimony sites in Peru, along with Machu Picchu, and Chan Chan, the sprawling capital of the coastal Chimu Empire.

Certainly, the approach to Chavin was awe-inspiring. A 10-hour bus trip from Lima took us over a 14,000-foot pass where we first encountered magnificent views of jagged, snow-capped peaks rising more than 20,000 feet. The bus zig-zagged down into a high, barren valley and then labored up to a pass over the Cordillera Blanca that registered almost 15,000 feet on a couple of pocket altimeters.

The white-knuckle ride down 4,000 feet to Chavin gave us an on-the-ground feel for the ruggedness of the landscape, and the fragility of access to the somewhat-

modern community of about 1,000 people. This lifeline – traveled mostly by diesel trucks and tourist buses spewing clouds of black smoke – was a one-lane gravel road with switchbacks carved into near-vertical slopes.

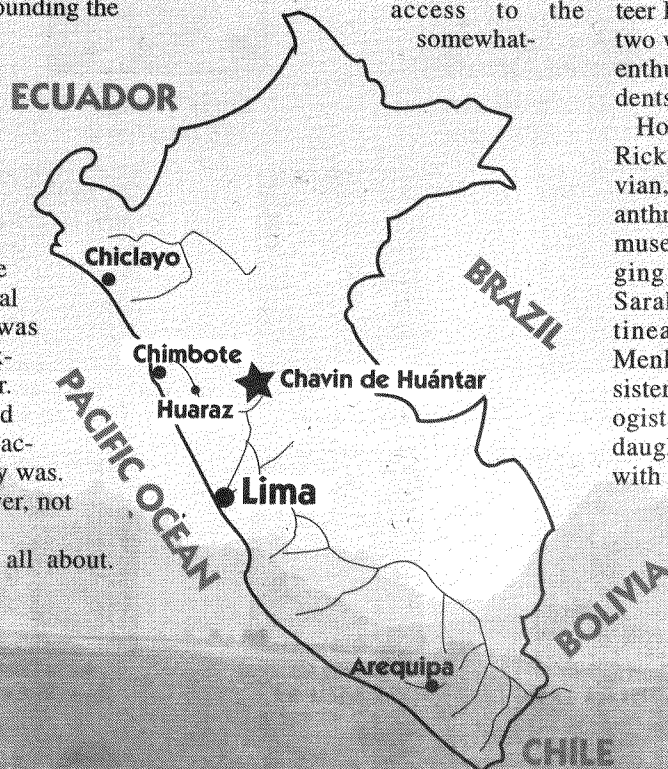
Miraculously, we only encountered one disabled vehicle, and rolled into Chavin in time for an ample dinner, where we met the rest of the team.

Four local residents were among the 15 non-archeologists who paid their own way for the privilege of digging history in this extraordinary place – and also helped support the research. We were members of Stanford's first research expedition organized by the Alumni Association Travel/Study Program.

Besides myself, the other "alums" – as we were generally called, even though some of us never went to Stanford – were former Mayor Gary McKae of Woodside, retired money manager John Kriewall of Atherton, and super-volunteer Hilary Valentine of Menlo Park. For two weeks we joined a crew of about 20 enthusiastic students and graduate students who became our mentors.

Holding everything together was Dr. Rick and his wife, Rosa, who is Peruvian, an archeologist, and curator of anthropology collections at the Cantor museum at Stanford. With them – digging valiantly – was their daughter Sarah, and her friend, Jeanne Martineau, soon-to-be sophomores at Menlo-Atherton High School. Rosa's sister, Maria Mendoza, also an archeologist, helped supervise, while her two daughters dug up pottery and bones with the rest of us.

After re-acclimatizing from 11,000 feet, and re-adjusting from Peruvian time and food,





Stanford team excavates a buried monument of huge rocks in the plaza in front of the New Temple at Chavin de Huantar, almost 11,000 feet in the Peruvian Andes. The Old Temple, with its mysterious oracle "Lanzon," is in the background to the right.

Mr. Kriewall reflects, "I thought the trip was terrific – even better in hindsight."

From potsherds to sea shells

It was after lunch on the last day of our dig. "I stuck the pick in, and there it was – like someone had placed it there," recalls Mr. Kriewall.

The exquisite little pottery bird, with flowing designs incised on it, was a whistle. It gave us its first notes in perhaps 2,000 years.

The occasional exciting finds made up for the tedium of picking and scraping and sifting that is so much of archeology. In the Circular Plaza, we mostly found shards of pottery, sometimes decorated; scraps of animal bones; a few arrowheads; and slivers of obsidian. Most were not even from Chavin times. We were clearing out the haphazard remains of a later village to get down to the level of the ancient ceremonial plaza.

By the end of the summer project, weeks after the alums had gone home, the Stanford crew and their Peruvian assistants got to the floor of the plaza, where crowds gathered for public rituals. "It was like a medieval cathedral floor in Europe – regularly laid out and

designed for visual impact," says Dr. Rick.

Around the floor, stalking toward the holy stairs, were more than a dozen jaguars elegantly carved in bas-relief on granite blocks. One of the thrills came when fellow excavator Rich Parker was carefully scraping slightly moist dirt away from one of the cats – and found traces of red pigment. Maybe they were painted!

With 30 to 50 people working every day, we were excavating five sites around the sprawling temple complex, half a kilometer square, and its outlying areas. Each night, over a hearty dinner at a local restaurant, we shared discoveries, while Tomas, a very modern kitten, passed from lap to lap and shamelessly begged for scraps.

Just above the Circular Plaza, Bo White was beginning to excavate the Caracolas Gallery. This is one of 26 galleries that thread the huge, solid temple mounds in an underground maze of tunnels, all robustly constructed out of carved rocks. Further labyrinths of smaller tunnels provide drainage, ventilation, and possibly light.

Everyone hung over his pit while Bo carefully scraped the dirt away from a large conch, or strombus shell. The shell, which

had traveled from Ecuador almost 500 miles and 11,000 vertical feet away, was carved to be a trumpet.

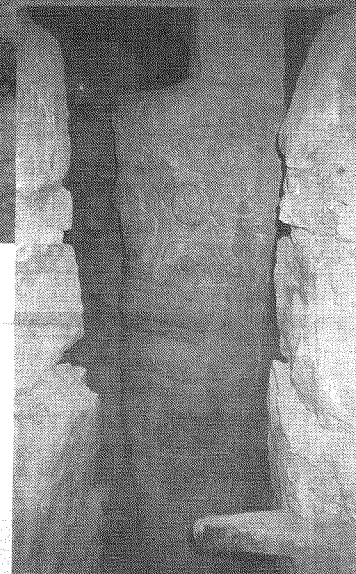
By the end of the season, Bo and his team had dug up 20 of the giant shells. All were carved to be trumpets, and many were elaborately decorated. Dr. Rick concludes the Caracolas Gallery was primarily a storage area for ritual objects used in ceremonies in the Circular Plaza.

The power of the strombus shells was later demonstrated at a press conference in Lima. Someone arranged for 12 strombus musicians to attend; they played the ancient shells, all at once, for the first time in almost 3,000 years. Dr. Rick describes the result as "a quavering, pulsing, resonant din."

On the other side of the Mosna River, another team was seeking evidence of the homes and lives of the elite who built Chavin, in a field of barley, corn and squash, behind a small farmhouse. Their most exciting find was a chamber tomb, with remains of four ancient people, and seven complete pots, from a later period than Chavin.

For Ms. Valentine, the high point of the dig was a little ceremony before

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Photos by Marion Softky

The oracle "Lanzon" at the cross of two tunnels.



Gary McKae of Woodside checks out construction at one of the stone galleries that thread the ancient temples at Chavin de Huantar.

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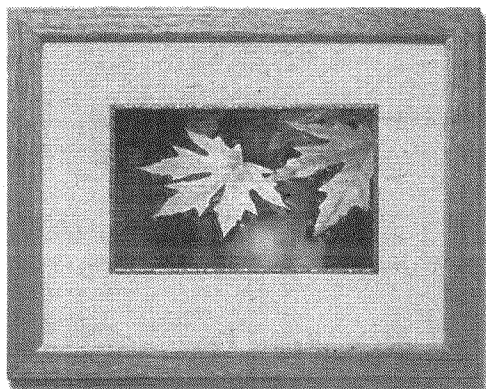
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Photos by Marion Softky

Circular Plaza that led to the holy steps and the oracle. Below: One of dozens of carved stone "tenon heads" that used to stick out of the walls of the temples at Chavin de Huantar. They apparently depict the changing of human faces into monsters under the influence of hallucinogenic cactus juice.

ROOTS OF RELIGION

continued from previous page

they removed the capstone from the tomb, which contained two mostly intact adult skeletons, and two children, identified only by their teeth. "We could peer inside and see a skull," she says.

With two Peruvians, the group made a small offering of tobacco; pisco, a Peruvian brandy; and crushed coca leaves on the tomb. "Victor took the pisco in his mouth and spit it over the capstone," she recalls.

Ms. Valentine's most exciting find was a complete pot with a sculpted face on it, at one handle. "They had never seen anything like that before," she says.

The greatest mystery remaining from the summer excavation centers on the Rectangular Plaza, a huge formal space in front of the New Temple, where many thousands could have assembled for rituals and ceremonies.

Digging in the precise center of the plaza — where groundprobing radar had shown something big under the flat plaza surface — the Stanford team found an assemblage of huge many-ton boulders carefully assembled, and later — equally carefully — buried. The largest — dubbed RBR for "really big rock" — weighs 10-20 tons, Dr. Rick estimates.

There were hollows between the rocks big enough for Abby Levine and a very small Peruvian to climb into. Next to the rocks, researchers found offerings: a magnificent carved stone pot a foot in diameter; cinnabar, beads, and a rare spondylus shell from Ecuador.

What was this all about? Dr. Rick shakes his head. "It was put in place by the Chavin people on top of other rocks. It was moved to the central axis of the plaza," he says. "It was some kind of offering at the time of construction of the

plaza — like a cornerstone laying. It was a tremendous effort.

"It doesn't look like a tomb, but I don't rule it out," he says. "Maybe next year will tell."

Our team was enormously impressed by the logistics of mounting five excavations, with so many people, in such a large and complex site. Dr. Rick was responsible for everything from lining up the Peruvian government and Stanford, to raising money and organizing people, to the sophisticated studies required for modern archeology.

In his seventh season at Chavin, Dr. Rick brings unwavering enthusiasm and immense energy to directing a multitude of tasks: mapping research areas; getting the information onto computers; collecting, cleaning and cataloguing artifacts from five locations. And he still greets every new find with joy.

"What a science it is!" says alum John Kriewall. "It was a brand newdoor-opening experience."

How does Dr. Rick keep it up? He replies: "I love archeology, I love Peru, I love discovery, I like the community of students and archeologists on a dig, and I'm fascinated by Chavin."

**Fiesta time**

For two weeks, we were part of a small community balanced between past and future. We couldn't mail postcards, but we could call home by telephone or Internet.

Trucks and busses, clogging the dusty main streets and snorting up the hill to connect with the allures of civilization, passed Indians tirelessly driving their cows, pigs, or burros top-heavy with loads of straw or sticks.

Here, the rural economy operates on foot. Men in ponchos, Andean women in short, full skirts and square hats, could almost have stepped out of Inca times. They walk up the dry valley slopes to their homes and patchwork fields. By hand, they

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