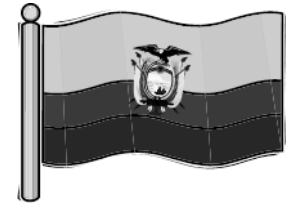


2007
EQUADORATION
Or, If It's Tuesday it Must Be Quito?
By: Penny Peters



Poetic muse, where can you be, it's time to write a rhyme
To tell of Grovers' travels to the Ecuadorian clime
To sing the Andes praises, and of Grovean delight
As we reveled in Quito's glories and the dizzying Andes heights

It's time to write a poem, but I fear there is too much to say
For this Grove out-memories all of the rest, we crammed in SO much every day
We never had even a minute that wasn't jam-packed mega-busy
And trying to recall everything that we did...well, it's definitely making me dizzy

The schedule says we spent only four days, but somehow that doesn't seem true
We must have been there for at least forty weeks, there was so much we managed to do
We breakfasted early in Quito, balanced eggs mid-day at the equator
Then unpacked our bags at San Luis [or Cusin], not more than a few hours later?

Can it be we were all in the Twilight Zone, or was that merely Edie's speech theme?
Was the time we were juggling 'virtual time,' and our overload merely a dream?
Or did we all bring along our "alternative selves" to sit pensively at every session
While our 'real' selves rushed to go shopping [yapa's surely the new Grove obsession]

This Grove was a definite whirlwind, we paneled, we learned, and we thought
And focused our sights on our deep inner selves [as well as on what we just bought]
Jose helped us look at of our past lives, while Edie spoke of future fates
[Will we really wind up dating robots soon, and marry "non-carbon" soul mates?]

Can you fall deep in love with your Blackberry? Is there really a perfect guy?
[Maybe...if you make sure his dopamine's low, when your own 'dope' levels test high]
Helen's warning: love only our opposites, immune systems must never quite match
If you're an 'explorer-director', then a 'builder's' your perfect catch

And we learned about managing conflict, eco-tourism, the why's of free trade
And yoga, and acid-free diets, and dark chocolate [the 90% grade]
And of sharing and caring and sisterhood, and generous deeds without end
Like Theresa inquiring, "Pardon me sir, might you donate some sperm to my friend?"

Ivy told us to "marry amazement," see the world with new eyes every day
That if each of us can find her own 'inner song' we can toss all our B12 away
And Jen agreed music has power, we should thank every sharp and each flat
Because music can stimulate Cortisol...which will keep us from getting too fat!

And we talked about Ecuador's women, and their spirit and talent and pluck
And the role micro-finance can play in their lives when they're just a bit down on their luck
And Yolanda and Gaby disarmed us, with hospitality that knew no end

They made us all feel like family, such warm welcomes did they both extend

We were all singing Ecuador's praises, and delighting in all of its riches
From its history, and folklore, and roses, to those elaborate embroidery stitches
And we learned the fine art of potatoes, each one special for just certain dishes

And the many ways we can eat popcorn, not just at movies, but in soup....quite delicious!

A retreat 'neath a volcano's shadow, in a garden of Andean flowers
Yet we barely found time for our spiritual sides....'cause the shopping bus left in two hours!
We had leather to buy [at least three jackets each] and Panama hats to acquire
And two-dollar scarves to bargain hard for [O.K. \$2.50 and not one cent higher]

Otavalo became a Grove stamina test, as we raced through the crafts and the weaving
And unloaded our wallets as fast as we could [there wasn't a rug we were leaving]
We bought purses, gold beads, and embroidered delights, and soft alpaca garments aplenty
And for every ten ponchos that Melanie bought, Alison Winter bought twenty!

And a few stalwart souls went to kayak or ride, despite leather-shopping's appeal,
They enjoyed the outdoors, gave up bargains for 'zen' [though those jackets were really a steal]
But a few of our lot, felt that leather beat all, they shopped so long they missed the bus
They spoke no Spanish words, and their taxi got lost, and took hours to find all of us

We never stopped moving, though we were half dead, and some of us had traveled for miles
Jane spent 36 hours from New Zealand to Quito, and was still wide-awake and all smiles
We 'connected' at breakfast, made new friends at lunch, stayed up talking until the wee hours
And when we found ten free minutes to go change our clothes, we chose to run drink pisco sours

After panels and shopping, and walking with Sue, and yoga and hours with Jose
We Grovers would not even think to relax....we had to dress up for Cirque de Soleil
Some of us donned real costumes, either rented or bought, and others made due with just passion But
whatever we wore and whatever we did, we were statements of haute-Grover fashion

Mary Louise was our ring-mistress 'glam,' and led our parade al la Cirque
We'd Peruvian maids, and jesters and mimes, and a sea goddess and a faux Turk
We had 'Cirque de la South' [decked in North-Madden gold] and a Zorro, and a high wire act
And 'Cirque de Old Age' [the original troupe] with a menopause song [where's their tact?]

And much to our surprise, those gals from Bhutan, just happened to be staying quite near
With their garbage bag 'hats' and Bhutanese chant [Monty Python's Michelle's next career]
Kyung's stellar splits, and those toilet paper rolls that became an equator display...
When they balanced that 'egg,' we all laughed so loud, the waiters went running away.

Our Cirque was so wild, and so witty, and weird, that the Andean spirits took flight
And hid in the volcanoes while Grovers rejoiced and danced round the bonfires all night
Shamanic traditions and Indian lore, were no match for primordial Grove rites
Women in wigs, danced with women in veils, and with women in white-face and tights

Sure Grovers get grumpy, when the busses are late, or they don't have hot water or light
Or their fireplace won't work, and it's 40 degrees, or their room's miles away late at night
Or they're staying at Cusin, which has such charm and art, but their friends are all too far to share it
And they've packed and unpacked just one too many times, and can't find jewelry when they want to
wear it

They may grouse and complain, and all try to take charge, but that's just their type 'A' coming through
What they're really about is resilience and care and sharing with the Grove, old and new

About welcoming Robbie, and Maggie, and Cheryl, and all of the other new folks
And sitting up late with their dear old Grove pals [and laughing at Michelle's dirty jokes]

About lending a hand to a Grover in need, or a room so a Cusin friend could change
Those Cusiners were 'room sluts' [Todd's apt name]...finding one in your shower wasn't strange We
all shared our clothes, our shampoo and our hearts, and reached out to help kids and career And
when one of us told of a new broken heart, it was every eye that shed a tear

Our sisterhood's real, we look after each other, we'll be there when a Grover needs care
And we'll party together and celebrate life, when a Grover has good news to share
We'll do yoga with Rita, wear Barbara's blue ribbons, and let Lorna conduct us in song
We'll aspire to wear colors like Deborah Wince-Smith and workout with Lyn to get strong

Mari Carmen's hot passions will keep us on fire, and Kyung's 'balance' will keep us inspired
And Judy and Vance and Marilyn and Grace keep us dancing, don't they ever get tired?
Suzanna will challenge us to reach new heights [although maybe not piloting a jet]
And the Ecuadorables remind us all always to laugh [that performance we'll never forget!]

This retreat had it all, but we'll remember most the great fun we had being together
For our sisterhood means more than the Andean views...or even the bargains on leather
We each share our gifts, but the best gift of all, comes from Susan, whom we all adore
Thank you Susan, again, for all that you do...and for giving us all ECUADOR!