

# California Reporter Describes Peru Mine Conditions

**Editor's note:**  
Despite such endeavors as the Alliance for Progress and the force of post World War II industrialization, few places in the world today have been more untouched by progress than some parts of Latin America. What is life really like in the back country of a turbulent hemisphere? Deep inside an old mine in Peru, a reporter for the Chico, Calif., Enterprise-Record found some of the answers.

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Written for  
United Press International  
TOMALAMANO, Peru (UPI)

To those of us who visited the Tomalamano mine high on the crest of the Andes, Miguelito is a boy without a face.

He is the sound of a pick chinking rhythmically in the depths of a dark pit. He is the curt signal for the raising of a sackful of ore, uttered in a muffled voice unbroken yet by manhood. He is the tiny flame flickering in the darkness of the mountain's bowels.

Most of all he is the symbol of a life of unbroken toil, lived today as it was 300 years ago, with little prospect of change for tomorrow and whose rewards amount to some 20 or 30 cents a day.

The rich ores—silver, iron, tin, copper, lead—that made Peru a prize for the rapacious conquistadores continue to flow from its mountains. Large modern mines, operated mostly by foreign interests, range up and down the rugged Andes and constitute Peru's second largest industry behind agriculture.

**Date Back to Incas**  
But there are also many mines like Tomalamano (Take my hand), hundreds of them, small worm holes lost in the mighty flanks of the Cordillera, where a man has to stoop to enter. They are carved out laboriously by means of hand tools and a rare stick of dynamite. Their origin dates back to Inca times. They are operated sporadically, when the market price of the metal they yield makes operation profitable for the dueno (owner) who, more often than not, lives in relative comfort in a distant city.

For the workers at Tomalamano, comfort is a very, very relative term.

Our interest was drawn to the mine during the 25-mile hike by our mountaineering party up the Quebrada (canyon) Honda that pierces the heart of the Cordillera Blanca 300 miles northwest of Lima.

The mine was shown on our maps as a symbol of two crossed picks. We could see it from camp in the Quebrada as a spiraling column of smoke near the top of cliffs crowned by the hanging glaciers of the Copap plateau, which, as far as was known, was as yet untrodden by man.

**Get Close Look**  
Several of us, including 17-year-old Jane Wyss of Austin, Texas, whose attributes in addition to a head of honey-colored hair and a beguiling manner, included some workable high school Spanish, climbed the trail for a close look. The zigzag path led steeply through sparse grass and clumps of lupine to a cluster of adobe huts perched precariously on the slopes at an altitude of about 15,500 feet.

Beyond the first huts the trail broadened slightly and formed a sort of balcony between two other huts connected by a low wall. A figure sat on a crude bench. He might have been a beggar or a bandit. Remnants of a tattered poncho hung from his shoulders. A piece of rope held up pants that once were brown. Feet caked with dirt protruded from ragged shoes. A hat that had seen many better days was pushed down over his head which was wrapped in a piece of woolen cloth. He watched us with sullen, distrustful eyes as we approached but at our "buenos dias," his face beamed into a smile.

"Buenos dias, señor," his greeting, like those of most of the Quechua Indians we met in the back country, was warm and sincere. He looked at us. We shifted our feet and looked at him.

**Snow Peaks Viewed**  
"It's very beautiful," Jane said finally, sweeping her arm toward the triumvirate of great snow peaks across the valley.

"Si, Senorita."  
"You work here?"  
"Si, Senorita."

Yes, he worked here, he said. He was now a supervisor. He struck the rusted triangle hanging outside his hut. The tones signalled the start and the end of work for the day. Six days a week. He had worked in the mine too, for a long time. He talked. He was anxious to talk. White visitors were rare. Few people came this far up the Quebrada. His name was Herardo.

We took some cans from our packs and had lunch, sitting around Herardo like courtiers. The attention pleased him. He accepted a can of tuna and a chocolate bar, thanking us courteously. Then he accepted our empty cans, saying he would make use of them.

The fish is "muy bueno" (very good), he said. What does he usually eat? "Patata" (potato). How about meat? He shrugged and laughed. Not often. Once, twice a month perhaps.

**Likes to Work**  
Did he have a family? "Ah, Si." He smiled broadly. "I have a wife and four sons." Where were they? He pointed to the west and mentioned the name of a town. When does he see them? Oh, once a month he goes home. What was he paid? Ten soles a day. (A sol is worth four cents). Who owned the mine? The Dueno in Huaraz. He has much money. Do you like to work here? Si. The dueno is a good man.

One could not help but think that during the lives of Herardo's ancestors under the Incas, miners were rotated every four months, or that their wives were located with their men at the mines or that sick and ailing miners were taken off the job and cared for by the state.

"Are you happy with your life?" Jane asked timidly. He shrugged.

"It gets a bit dull sometimes." Then Herardo questioned us. He looked at our fancy climbing boots. How much? About \$35. We explained what this was in soles.

"Whew," he whistled. "And in America, do they have mines?"  
"Yes, many of them."  
"Big mines, with compressors and motors and machines?"  
"Yes, in almost all of them."  
He nodded. "And how much do miners make in America?"  
We didn't know. We guessed about \$25 a day, roughly 625 soles.

"Whew. I would like to visit your America."  
"How many are working in the mine?" Jane asked.  
"Boy Works in Mine."  
"We are five. Oh, five and the boy."  
"The boy?"  
"Yes. He works here."  
"How old is he?"

"Miguelito? He is 14."  
"Where is he now?"  
"In the mine."  
"Can we see him?"  
"You wish to enter the mine?" We looked around at each other uncertainly. There were nooks.

"Yes. Is it possible?"  
He got up and pushed open the door to his hut. The head of a small deer hung on the wall just inside.

"Hunters came," he said in answer to a question. "Once there were many of these. Now there are no more."  
He came out with a small

carbide lamp and lit it. A thin flame pushed out from the center of the dirty reflector. We followed Herardo up the trail, across a little stream that flowed from the mouth of a shaft sunk horizontally into the cliff and stopped at a low, long structure with thatched roof and no front wall. It was divided into compartments.

**Visit Dark Mine**  
He led us into the shaft and we were soon stumbling in virtual darkness, trying to see where to place our feet by the feeble, dancing light of Herardo's lamp. Finally we grabbed each other's belts. We plunged deeper into the mountain, winding from one side shaft into another.

Herardo shone the light on the roof at a low place. We ducked under and emerged into a narrow cavern. The dust hung thickly and only after a few seconds did we notice a pit gaping at our feet and another Indian standing on the far side of a windlass made of undressed logs. A thick rope led down into the pit. The sound of metal striking on rock reverberated from the darkness. Herardo pointed down.

"Miguelito?" Jane asked incredulously. "Down there?"  
"Si."  
A voice called something from the pit. The Indian who was almost in darkness turned the creaking windlass. A small piece of sacking filled with ore rose up and was emptied into a wheelbarrow. The empty sack was sent down again.

"What a way to make a living," someone said.  
The pick sounded again.  
"Ask him if they can send the boy up," I asked Jane (thinking of a picture). No, he could not come up until 5 p.m.

when work was stopped. What about lunch? There was no lunch. There were two ten-minute rest periods during the day, however. What time did work start? At seven. There was a cough in the pit and it started a chain reaction of coughing among us.

"Why must a young boy work in a place like this?" Jane asked.  
"A boy must eat as well as a man," Herardo answered.  
"How long will Miguelito be here at the mine?"  
"Ah, who knows? A man works until he dies."

"Let's go," someone said.  
It was a relief to step outside into the pure air. The sun shone brightly and small clouds were wrapping themselves around the summit of mighty Palcaraju across the valley.

We thanked Herardo and started down the trail. He stood for a long time watching us go down, a monkish looking figure in his getup. The last hut in the village had no door and it was newly white-washed inside. On a rough stone pedestal with fresh flowers garlanded with fresh flowers. Flowers grew outside in profusion.

**LEADS HELPING HAND**  
LOS ANGELES (UPI)—The police force had help Wednesday from the consul of Bolivia, Duke C. Banks. He directed traffic at a busy intersection for one hour. Banks explained that he found the signal lights at the intersection jammed and traffic backed up just as children were being dismissed from a nearby school. "Nobody seemed to be doing anything about them, so I did something," he said.

## PIGGY WIGGLY

Fresh Pork  
Country Style  
**Spare Ribs**  
Swift's Premium Pork  
**49¢ lb**

**SLAB Bacon**  
6 to 8 lb. Average  
Dubuque half or whole slab.  
**49¢ lb**

Center Cut  
**Pork Chops**  
Swift's Premium lean center cut chops.  
**69¢ lb**

**Pork Loin Roast**  
Swift's Premium tender roasts.  
**49¢ lb.**



## FALL FOOD Favorites

DINTY MOORE  
**BEEF STEW**  
2 24-oz. tins **79¢**

**Campbell's Soups**  
ALL VARIETIES  
10 1/2 oz. Tin  
**8 Tins \$1.00**

**CRISCO Shortening**  
3 LB. TIN  
**59¢**



**CHILDREN LABOR HERE** — In rural areas of Peru, children grow up quickly. They are given adult responsibilities and engage in hard labor. Here one little girl from Taena, totes a sister, little younger than herself, in traditional Indian method of pick-a-back in a blanket on back knotted in front. (UPI)

PLYMOUTH  
**MARGARINE**  
Colored and Cubed  
7 lbs. **\$1.00**

NALLEY'S  
**SPAGHETTI & MEAT**  
303 Tin  
7 tins **\$1.00**

PLYMOUTH  
**Bleach**  
Full Gallon  
**49¢**

SUNSHINE  
**Graham Crackers** 1 lb. pkg. **35¢**  
SUNSHINE  
**Hydrox Cookies** 1 lb. package **49¢**  
REGULAR 53c  
**Crest Toothpaste** tube **39¢**  
FOLGER'S  
**Coffee** 2 lb. Tin **97¢** 1 lb. Tin **49¢**  
FOLGER'S  
**Instant Coffee** 6 oz. jar **89¢**  
NALLEY'S  
**Lumberjack Syrup** 24 oz. Bottle **39¢**  
NALLEY'S  
**Mayonnaise** Full Quart **49¢**  
PURINA  
**Dog Chow** 5 lb. Bag **59¢**  
NESTLES  
**Quik** 2 lb. 6 oz. Tin **89¢**  
SILK  
**Bathroom Tissue** 4 Roll Pkg. **35¢**  
SILK  
**Facial Tissue** 400 Ct. 5 Pkgs. **\$1.00**

Piggly Wiggly Fresher Produce  
**TOMATOES**  
Local Grown, Vine Ripe  
SLICING SIZE  
**8¢ Lb.**

U.S. No. 2 Russett  
**Potatoes**  
LB. BAG **50¢ 1.29**

**Artichokes** Fresh New Crop 2 for **29¢**  
**Broccoli** Crisp Fresh Bunches lb. **19¢**  
**Jonathan Apples** New Crop Wash. 4 lb. Bag **59¢**  
**Red Delicious Apples** New Crop Wash. lb. **19¢**  
**Grapefruit** Calif. Sunkist White 2 for **29¢**