



# THE AMERICAN & CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PERU

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July 2005

## Restaurant Night with Mitch Teplitsky

This month's ACAP Restaurant Night will bring members together at the posh Club Empresarial in San Isidro, where we will be delighted by the treats from the kitchen, and also entertained by New York film producer Mitch Teplitsky, who will speak about his documentary "Soy Andina" (see interview below). Mitch will discuss the origin of the film and its importance for Peru and will tell us about some of the challenges and rewards he faced while working on location in the Andes, in Lima and Peru's northern coast. Dinner guests will be privileged to preview scenes from the soon-to-be released feature and, following his presentation, will have the opportunity to engage personally with Mitch, who recently became an ACAP member. So mark your calendars for July 14th this is another ACAP dinner you won't want to miss! The cost for the three course meal is S/.60 for members and S/.70 for non-members. The Club Empresarial is located at Via Principal 165, Torre Real 3, in San Isidro, right beside the Swiss Hotel (Swissôtel).



To reserve your place for this special event, call Linda and Andrea at 222-6359.

### Mitch Teplitsky and "Soy Andina"

Mitch Teplitsky jokingly refers to himself as the "poorest graduate from the Wharton School of Business." It wasn't always that way. After leaving the university, he worked in marketing for corporate media companies for several years. He moved into the independent film world as marketing director for the Film Society of Lincoln Center, where he gained a passion for documentary films and he decided to follow his true calling. So he bit the financial bullet and jumped head-first into his real passion documentary filmmaking.

#### Directions to Club Empresarial:

In the building to the left of the main entrance to the Swiss Hotel in San Isidro. To drive to the front of the Club entrance: from Av. Miró Quesada (a.k.a., Golf) - take Santo Toribio, which is the first right heading down from Av. Camino Real. Then take the first right onto Choquehuanca. A half block before hitting Av. Camino Real, take a left straight up to the Club alongside the Swiss Hotel.

For those coming down from Juan de Arona and the Corpac area of S.I., go through the oval and, in front of the Virgen del Pilar church, take the first entrance to the left after the Camino Real building and follow ramp around to the left and down, and make a complete circle up again to the Club entrance alongside the Swishotel.

Valet parking can be arranged for those who request it in advance and a control list will be kept at the reception.

Mitch's career as a filmmaker began years earlier, when he would sit his aged grandmother in front of his high-8 video camera and interview her about her childhood in Poland and ensuing voyage to the United States prior to the second-world war. The

experience of documenting his grandmother's life taught Mitch two important lessons: the importance of maintaining a connection to your roots, and how difficult it can be to travel back home.

When she arrived to the U.S. in the 1930s as a poor, young Jewish Pole, Mitch's grandmother faced hardships that he found difficult to comprehend. She would speak to Mitch with great nostalgia for the place of her birth, but sadly, she was never able to go home, since the Nazis destroyed everything she had left behind.

After cutting his teeth with this and other small projects, Mitch found a subject so compelling that he quit his marketing career to begin documentary film-making on a full-time basis. At first glance, there was nothing special about the young Peruvian immigrant to New York, but this is where Mitch's talent began to show though. He was able to see beneath the surface of his character and thus, discovered a story waiting to be told. When he learned that she was planning a very special visit home to Peru, he asked if he could join her to document her experience. The resulting video is a treat for the senses. The story Mitch tells in "Soy Andina" reaches far beyond the angle of journey and reunion; it is a story of music, dance and emotion that will eventually educate and entertain audiences around the world to the wealth and depth of Peruvian culture and the warmth of the people who live here.

**ACAP:** Mitch, how did "Soy Andina" get its start?

**Mitch:** It had its roots in 1989 when I first met Nelia and I became immersed in the Peruvian immigrant community in New York. When she returned in 2000 to host the "Fiestas Patronales" in her community, I decided that that would be a rich story for a documentary.

**ACAP:** Why would an audience in the United States, or anywhere for that matter, be interested in this kind of story?

**Mitch:** Well, (laughing), you would have to ask the 100 million people who watched the Buena Vista Social Club, which was a recent documentary about a musician's trip to Cuba. People love journey films into a new culture, and in this case, we are taking people into Peru, especially into the world of music and dance, which I think will be a delight. It is also a story about going home, and about how difficult that can be once you have been away for a few years. I think this is a story that a lot of people can relate to.

**ACAP:** What is the documentary about?

**Mitch:** This is actually not one, but two stories of women who travel to Peru on a journey of discovery and reunion. The first woman is Nelida, who migrates from Ancash to New York, and the story of her return to her birthplace in Ancash to realize her dream of hosting the "Fiesta Patronal" an 8-day explosion of music, dance and ritual. It is the one time a year where everyone who has left the village comes back. The other story is that of Cynthia, a 26-year old modern/hip-hop dancer who grew up in New York. Her mother is Peruvian and her dad is from Puerto Rico. This film documents her journey back to Peru to study folkloric dance in Peru for one year. Their stories eventually intertwine, and each of them has an impact upon the other. In this story, the glue that keeps the protagonists of this story connected to each other, and to their culture, is dance.

**ACAP:** Was it difficult to film in some of the locations you went to?

**Mitch:** I am trying to make a very personal documentary, and I found that trying to win the trust of the characters in the Andes, some of whom are very shy, was at times difficult.

**ACAP:** If your grandmother were alive today, what would she say about your movie?

**Mitch:** My grandmother would be very proud, because this story is a version of her own. She always used to teach me to be proud of who we are and where we are from, while also respecting others. We all come from someplace, and in the world we live in now, with all the migration and globalization, a lot of people are quickly losing their connection with where their family originates. Knowing your roots, and having a sense of where you come from, is comforting and it is important that we do not forget traditions that are beautiful and worthwhile. "Soy Andina" speaks to these points.

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Recent Event
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Recent Event

**Articles:**

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Your chance to get involved
2. [School News](#)
3. [Hi-Tek Peru](#)  
Your technology connection in Lima  
*Wireless Access Point / Router II*
4. [Money Matters](#)  
Starting a Business in Peru - II
5. [WebScout](#)  
Government Transparency: A Key to Strengthening Democracy
6. [Canadian Alumni Association of Peru](#)
7. [Destination Peru](#)  
Pariaccacca, the Other Sacred Inca Trail
8. [In a Strange Land](#)  
Learning the language
9. [The Lighter Side](#)  
Questions And Answers
10. [Odds & Ends](#)  
The Pride of Peru
11. [Health & Nutrition](#)  
Beware of Strange and Wild Animals
12. [Street Wise](#)  
Avenida Salaverry named for Executed Patriot
13. [Flora and Fauna](#)  
Biggest of them all - the Andean Condor

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Av. Angamos Oeste 1155 Miraflores, Lima 18  
Telf - 222 6359 / Fax - 441 4545 / Email - [office@acap-peru.org](mailto:office@acap-peru.org)

**Office Hours**  
Monday - Friday: From 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM