

# THE DREAM SCENE



Issue no. 67 1st of September 2012



Bienvenido a todos.

August was, as predicted by many, an incredibly hot month. The Spanish called it 'African heat.' Locally it peaked one afternoon at 37° in the shade. It was so hot in Los Altos that the palm trees were whistling for the dogs. In San Miguel the cows were giving evaporated milk, and in Los Montesinos the farmers were feeding their chickens crushed ice to keep them from laying hard-boiled eggs!

**Apologies to Aldi's and to those who read my entry last month that Aldi's was closing. I am pleased to say that Aldi's is NOT closing down and will continue to provide many competitively priced products locally to its customers. The confusion arose when a 'clearance sign' was misread by me as a 'closing-down' sign! 'I blame the heat, Your Honour!' From the affair, two things emerged. One, that Aldi's is a very popular store locally and many were prepared to petition to keep it open; and two, as the Dream Scene seems to be read by so many people locally, the store was inundated with questions regarding its future. Once again, apologies all round.**

July was a record month for tourists in the Valencian region with a total of 811,354 foreign tourists, up 7.9% on the same period last year. Foreign tourists arriving at El Altet airport in Alicante totalled 399,286 during the month, while the Manises airport near Valencia City welcomed 119,808 foreigners, up by 15.5% on July last year. For the month, the national increase was about 3.35%.

The very hot, dry weather together with high winds contributed to some very large and often uncontrollable fires throughout the length of the Mediterranean Coastline. A particularly bad fire across three inland municipalities in Alicante took the lives of an environmental agent and a fire-fighter. In the Canaries, a large section of the population of the island of La Gomera; some 5,000 of a population of just over 20,000, had to be evacuated away from the flames, some having to be evacuated from the beach. La Gomera has now lost 11% of its surface area to the fire.

Here in Spain, it seems to be cuts, tax increases and austerity everywhere. Large IVA (VAT) increases are due from today, September 1. (See issue number 66 for details.) Also from this date, around 425 drugs will be excluded from the public health system. That is the state will no longer pay for them. If you want them, you pay for them! There is a list of 417 of them here - [http://estaticos.elmundo.es/documentos/2012/08/17/lista\\_medicamentos.pdf](http://estaticos.elmundo.es/documentos/2012/08/17/lista_medicamentos.pdf)

The local Orihuela Council will be attempting to save on energy bills by reducing public street lighting. From 1.00am in the mornings, this type of lighting will be reduced selectively.

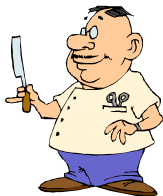
The unpaid and often unappreciated gardeners & landscapers of the planted areas in Dream Hills tell me that people are still stealing from these areas; a number of plants and rose bushes being stolen during the last month.

One of Spain's most enjoyable and craziest fiestas, *La Tomatina*, takes place every year on the last Wednesday in August. I make no excuses for including once again, a first hand report on the fiesta by Jules, which I originally published in January 2010. (Jules is a skilled hair-dresser who does home visits. See her advert in the classified's.) The accompanying photos in the article are from the web.

A warm welcome to Tony in Marbella, one of our new email readers.

Our sincerest best wishes to Margaret Johnston, who is currently undergoing surgical treatment in Elche Hospital. Also best wishes and a speedy recovery to one of the Dream Scene's great joke providers, Pete Dudman.

Wishing you an excellent September, Mick & Tid



## A Close Shave

A man enters a barber's for a shave.

While the barber is foaming him up, the man mentions the problem he has getting a close shave around his cheeks.

'I have just what you need,' says the barber giving him a small wooden ball. 'Just place this between your cheek and gum.' The man does so and the barber starts to give him the closest shave the man has ever experienced.

When the barber finishes the client asks, 'Hey, what if I swallowed this thing?'

'No problem,' replies the barber. 'You'd just bring it back tomorrow like everyone else.'



'We don't have air-con in the bedroom. I ask the wife for sex and it's chilly in seconds!'

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After the briefest of vacation periods, the Spanish Cabinet reconvened mid-month with just one subject on its mind: the economy, which looks to be heading toward needing a full bailout. Statements made by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and his ministers have evolved from denying that there will be a full rescue for Spain, to "let's see first what the European Central Bank does and then we'll take a decision." Some kind of bailout, whether granted with soft or tough conditions, appears to be inevitable now, and pensions — previously the one area in which the government wasn't willing to make cuts — are no longer untouchable. Further tax rises may also be in the pipeline as Rajoy's administration battles to bring the deficit down to 6.3 percent of GDP by the end of the year.

As Economy Minister Luis de Guindos revealed, the Spanish government believes that "the Eurogroup will define the procedures [for a bailout] in the second week of September." And before that happens, the government wants to ensure that it is able to meet its deficit targets, given that a rescue would be conditioned by a request for continuous information about public spending and revenue. "With the cuts that we've made, we more or less know where we are in terms of spending," says one government source. "But we don't know how revenues are going to go."

Meanwhile, some of the cuts that have already been introduced will begin to take effect on September 1, when around 150,000 immigrants who are in Spain but do not have their residency status in order will no longer qualify for free healthcare. Five regions — Andalusia, Asturias, the Basque Country, the Canary Islands and Catalonia — have said that they will ignore the new rules from the central government and will continue to treat all patients. (Source: El Pais) Many, many doctors have also complained against what they see as discrimination of the 'paperless.'

Spain may yet be able to fend off a bail-out for some time. It has some cash reserves and can still borrow at short maturities. The euro area also has its temporary rescue fund, which will lend the Spanish government the initial sum of money for the banks. But even if Spain survives a hot summer, the markets are signalling that it will need a full bail-out later this year. PM Rajoy has described a bleak landscape with more than 900 billion € in debt and where 8 billion € in interest payments have to be met next year. That would be a nightmare, and not just for Spain. The Spanish government must borrow €385 billion until the end of 2014 to cover its budget deficit and other needs such as bond redemptions, according to economists at Credit Suisse. Even if the IMF chips in a third as in previous bail-outs, European lenders would have to find €250 billion or so. They have already committed €100 billion to rescuing Spanish banks, so for other emergencies they would have only €150 billion of the €500 billion now in their rescue kitties.

The Spanish government's budget program for 2013-2014, which it handed in to Brussels in early August, includes legal reforms that will affect the retirement age and speed up the date for implementing changes, now set for 2027. The plan includes restricting access to early and partial retirement, and faster implementation of the new retirement age, possibly 67, as well as different parameters for calculating pensions. Pensions are currently the biggest expense on the Spanish budget. This year, the government will pay out €120 billion, representing around a quarter of all spending and over 10% of the nation's GDP. The Cabinet has frozen job offers in the public sector until 2014. The measure is expected to save them 5.3 billion €

And in the Health and Education sectors, there will be more cuts in 2013 and 2014 which are expected to total €15 billion for both years. The Government has said that the total cuts between 2012 and 2014 will be €02.149 billion.

The exit of capital from Spain was €41.294 billion in May, in part because of the Bankia crisis. This year to May the exit capital from the country was 163.185 billion € compared to 14.598 billion last year for the same period.

The BBVA bank wants to accelerate the sale of the stock of property the bank has in its portfolio. It says it wants no property left at the start of 2014, and hopes it can sell all the flats and shop premises in between 18 and 21 months. Most banks will try and dispose of delinquent properties before a 'bad bank' is created. This type of 'bank' will only pay a very low price for the transferred delinquent loans relating to these properties. Either way it will mean that property prices will remain depressed for a long time to come.

Car sales fell by 17% in the worst July for sales in history. Only 65,322 registrations occurred over the month, and now the experts are saying the projection for car sales in 2012 will be back at 1980 levels. The vehicles which sold the most were the 'micro' cars, up 16.9% and the small four wheel drives, up 14.3%.

National Police have arrested a 33-year-old woman in Valencia and her father, 64, on suspicion of fraud. It seems they have been collecting their deceased mother's pension since 1992, when she died. According to a statement from the police, in fifteen years (from 1997 to 2011) the amount of money paid in respect of the pension was about 85,000 euros, to which must be added the period between 1992 and 1997, for which the National Institute of Social Security was unable to provide the relevant information.

One of the main consumer associations in Spain, FACUA, is advising people to campaign against the government cuts. The government feels that by doing this, the organisation is acting outside its authority and playing politics, and says that it will remove the association's special status if it continues.

Nissan is to manufacture the new London taxis at the plant in Barcelona. The Japanese will build a new 'black cab' which is capable of turning around in just 7.6 m which they say is 50% more efficient than current taxis, and is based on the NV200 van.

Spain's worsening economic crisis - coupled with deep spending cuts in health means working under temporary contracts with little hope of a permanent position in a hospital - is prompting growing numbers of young medics whose training has cost the country millions of euros to leave to work abroad. Médica Colegial, the body that represents Spain's medical associations, says that in the first six months of this year it issued around 1,350 copies of medical licenses required under European Union law for doctors and nurses who want to work outside their own country. Last year it issued 2,349 such copies, and 1,835 the previous year. These are just some of those leaving to work abroad; non-EU states do not require the certificate.

Spain's 17 autonomous regions, who can no longer borrow on international markets due to crumbling confidence, are relying increasingly on the central government's ability to tap investors on their behalf.

El Mundo headlines that the Government has threatened to use article 155 of the Spanish Constitution for the first time against the regional governments. María Fernández Curcias, the Secretary of State for Budgets, said there was no leeway for irresponsibility, and she warned Andalucía and Cataluña that the Government has 'very strong mechanisms' available, including taking control of the autonomous regions!

Derek just fitted strobe lights in the bedroom. . . . .He says it makes his wife look like she's moving during sex.

Did you hear about the Los Altos flasher who was thinking about retiring?

He decided to stick it out for one more year.



## What's Up? continued

As the 'dodgy' Duke of Palma, Iñaki Urdangarin, now faces additional charges, he has asked for 'temporary leave' from Telefónica with the suspension of his contract. The duke said 'In the face of a possible open judicial procedure that I am facing, I feel that could have some negative consequence on Grupo Telefónica, and to avoid these possible effects, I have decided to ask the company for 'a temporary leave and the suspension of my contract and my functions'. The duke's main function was to collect €2.7 million annually from Telefónica - Issue 66.

Further details of the increase in Spanish IVA, hidden away in the small print, have come to light. In yet another illogical and seemingly desperate move, the central government has decided to increase the "retention" (or retained part of a self-employed, or "Autonomo's" monthly income) from 15% to 21% from 1st September until the end of 2013. From 1st of 2014 the percentage will be 19%. A further nugget of wisdom buried away in the 2013 draft budget act is the upward revision of excise duty for biofuels, natural gas and butane. These increases will take effect from January 1st 2013 and run indefinitely, meaning the end of oil tax exemption for biofuels. The tax increases on oil alone are expected to net the Government 1,150 million euros per year. (Source: Cinco Diaz)

The DGT traffic authority in Spain is **considering** taking the alcohol limit on the roads down to zero. It would mean that anybody who had drunk just a drop of alcohol could be punished. The DGT says alcohol starts to effect drivers after just one drop and they are considering introducing a zero tolerance as has already been applied to drugs. The current alcohol limits are 0.5 grams in a litre of blood, or 0.25 grams in a litre of breathed air, reduced to 0.3 and 0.15 grams for drivers with less than two years experience and for professional drivers. An increased campaign in the hunt for alcohol and drugs ran from the 20th to 26th of August.

The municipality of San Vicente del Raspeig in Alicante has reported the theft of a thousand feet of street lighting cable in a neighbourhood of the town known as the "Sunflowers". Two manhole covers were also stolen!

A cache of three tons of cocaine was intercepted 50 miles off the coast of Cadiz last month. Among those arrested is a 57-year-old sergeant in the Guardia Civil. The sergeant, according to investigations, acted as guarantor, reassuring those who financed the drug shipments that the drugs could be landed without problems. It has emerged that the sergeant is part owner of a villa, several houses, two bars and possibly a hotel as well. Maybe he is just careful with the housekeeping money?

A 75-year-old Briton has been arrested by the Guardia Civil onboard his luxury yacht, 'Arabian Sunshine' crossing the Strait of Gibraltar. The yacht was found to be carrying 1,038 kilos of hashish. The Guardia Civil stopped the yacht when it was halfway across the Strait even though it tried to escape when it noticed the presence of the Guardia Civil. The value of the drugs on the market would have been €1.6 million. Let's hope that the Guardias can hang on to it! They lose them occasionally!

In Alicante, two local policemen were injured, one seriously, while questioning illegal street traders. The police were attacked by a group of 15 Senegalese using sticks and metal bars. There has been an increase in these violent confrontations locally.

The City of Alicante is stepping up its program regarding the registration of dangerous dogs. If you fail to register what is classed as an aggressive breed you now face a fine of between €2,404 and €15,000! Eleven owners have already been fined the lesser amount. Dangerous dogs must always be muzzled in public and always on a lead.

### Families

- My mother was a ventriloquist. She was always throwing her voice. For ten years I thought the dog was telling me to kill my father.
- Never raise a hand to your children - it leaves your groin unprotected.
- My mother never saw the irony in calling me a son of a bitch.

Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it wrongly and applying unsuitable remedies.  
Groucho Marx

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In Spain's North African enclave, Cueta, outbreaks of rabies in dogs are not uncommon. However, a recent outbreak has forced the city to impose a six-month ban on any dogs leaving the area. All dog owners who wish to walk their dogs in the area must now put a lead and a muzzle on their dog.

Traditionally, Spanish children have eaten hot meals in the school canteen during a two-hour lunch break for a monthly fee paid for by parents that averages around 4.50 euros a day. With the deepening crisis, which has left Spain with a 25 per cent unemployment rate and seen public workers salaries slashed, many parents are now opting to save money and send their children (called *Tupperware kids*) to school with homemade lunches. However, when the new school year starts in September, parents may now find themselves subject to a daily fee of up to 3 euros depending on the region, even if they send children in with a homemade meal. Families will have to stump up for "the relative cost for the use of the dining room and the supervision that entails", state new guidelines to be issued by the education board of Madrid. Valencia says it will leave it to the school boards to decide, but suggests a token symbolic payment of €1.45 a day! This is hardly 'token' as it comes to €29 a month for just one child!

If for some calamitous reason you find yourself in prison in Spain, try to arrange it in Catalonia. The amount spent on a prisoners' food per day in Catalonia is €1 each, whereas in the remainder of Spain it is just €3.60! There are some 87 prisons in Spain with a prison population of approx' 80,000.

There have been 14 incidents of young people falling or jumping from balconies so far this year, four cases resulted in death while others have been seriously injured. The Foreign Office and ABTA - The Travel Association, have joined forces on a campaign to help prevent balcony incidents among young people in popular holiday resorts. In Majorca and Ibiza, for instance, two of UK's top tourist destinations, there have been 9 cases - already matching figures for 2011, despite only being part way through the season. Most incidents involve young people between the ages of 18 and 35 and whilst not always the case, alcohol often plays a part.



## The Orihuela Costa Summer Festival

The main event locally last month was the *5fest fiesta* which was held in Orihuela Costa from August 15 to 19. The venue for most of this was the walking/exhibition area close to the beach at Playa Flamenca. This is actually the culmination of a 20-day fair, with some stalls and outlets, together with large marquees etc. There was also a free concert each evening at this location starting on the first night with a 'Night on Broadway' with singer dancer Solange Freyre, followed on successive nights by a 'Night of Jazz,' a 'Night of Flamenco' and a 'Night of Pop-Rock Music.'

Then on the final evening, August 19, the concert shifted to the car park at the new *La Zenia Boulevard* commercial centre, where the 'big name' Carlos Jean performed. Although many non-Spanish may have never heard of this chap, Carlos Jean (photo) is very well known among Hispanic and Latino communities as a successful D.J., singer and songwriter, and is certainly a crowd puller. He has received seven Latin Grammy nominations and features in the latest Coca Cola TV/cinema advert in Spain.



But, as one expects in these cases, not everybody was happy with the *5fest*. Firstly, business and private trader associations from the coast, representing around 400 businesses, came out strongly against the event saying that those who organised the fiesta - Pedro Mancebo

and a CLr colleague from the town hall - had reneged on previous promises he gave to the local businesses. They complained that whereas Mancebo had assured them local businesses would always be consulted in relation to these events, they were now met by a 'conspiracy of silence.' They also stated that they did not want to see such events organised in August as it took away business from the local establishments. It seems that the organising company for the event wanted €300 from every business which wished to participate; a figure which local businesses say was extortionate, particularly as in the past they were allowed to participate in similar events by the previous government for little or no charge. But being realistic, €300 for 20 days is not onerous.

But then it was revealed by Informacion.es that Snr Mancebo, the newly appointed Councillor for the Coast, stated that Carlos Jean was allocated a budget of €38,900 fee for performing on August 19. Naturally this raised many eyebrows locally, particularly as a number of local services have been deteriorating because the council said it has ran out of funds. Carlos Jean then announced that his fee was nothing like the budgeted amount! But of course one must remember that the town hall does not hire the artists directly, it goes through a promotion company (coincidentally from the nearby town of Jacarilla) Globalplay, and no one knows what their cut will be. In any event the Carlos Jean concert at the Zenia Boulevard car park on the Sunday, was packed with the young and the young at heart, Spanish press say 8/9,000. However, there was no parking in or near the event, so if you couldn't walk to the event, you didn't see it!

Now I believe it is very good for the area to have high profile events in the summer. Orihuela Costa was becoming a bit sterile in terms of fiestas and public events. Much of the fiesta entertainment organised through the previous administration was amateurish and puerile. You have to 'spend the bucks' on good artists/acts and promote them properly if you want to draw the crowds. Although the Orihuela Tourist Office took out whole page adverts in local English-language advertisers, very few locals I spoke to were aware of the event or visited it. A major issue also is the main location of the fiesta - the frontage at Playa Flamenca. On two successive evenings we tried to park in the area to check-out the entertainment, but all the available parking spaces were taken by the numerous holiday residents in the apartments nearby. Tid and I, no doubt with many others, had to give up and go elsewhere. It was a similar case last year and the lesson has not been learned. You can check-out some amateurish videos below of the event on YouTube, but the sound is muted.....mercively!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYnALNz2NAo> & <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgFplvtfC-A>

But Torrevieja also splashed-out the 'big bucks' on August 18. On that night the popular Spanish Diva, Isabel Pantoja (photo), performed. The Torrevieja town council paid the promoter €35,000 for the act, although the public, unlike those in Orihuela Costa, were also charged between €25 to €40 each for the show, with not a single euro going back to the town hall! The city council report that 2,000 saw the show, the promoter says only 1,374. Pantoja is an intriguing character with an interesting biography, and will be the subject of another article in a future issue. She is due to make another court appearance soon, possibly in early October, for alleged money laundering and other charges.



### Speak Up!

A judge asks a surly defendant if he has anything to say for himself. The defendant mutters, 'F\*\*k all!' 'What did he say?' asks the judge. The court clerk turns to the judge and whispers, 'The defendant said "F\*\*k all", Your Honour.' 'Really?' replies the judge. 'I could have sworn I saw his lips move.'

### The Jemmy

There's been a prison riot and the Governor is interviewing one of the convicts involved. 'I understand that your main complaint was about the quality of the food,' says the Governor. 'That's right,' replies the convict. The Governor continues, 'But what I don't understand is how you escaped from your cell. What did you use to lever open the door?' The convict replies, 'A rice pudding.'



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### Doris's Depilatory

My wife, Doris, found out that our dog could hardly hear, so she took it to the vet. The vet said the problem was hair in the dog's ears. He cleaned both ears and the dog could then hear just fine. The vet told my Doris that if she wanted to stop this recurring, she should get some proprietary hair remover and rub it in the dog's ears once a month.

Doris bought some and at the cash register, the pharmacist told her, "If you're going to use this under your arms, don't use deodorant for a few days."

Doris said, "I'm not using it under my arms."

The pharmacist said, "If you're using it on your legs, don't use body lotion for a couple of days."

Doris replied, "No. I'm not using it on my legs either. If you must know, I'm using it on my Schnauzer."

The pharmacist said, "Okay then, but stay off your bicycle for about a week."



What do you call a Spanish sheep with no legs?

Gracias.



### More Electrickerly!

The cost of Electricity (consumption) will be increased by around 10% in September, with charges being backdated to March of this year. This is the third increase in 2012. It follows the increase in the cost of electricity (supply) on the 1st of July of 3.95% and an increase of an average of 6% of the 1st of April.

The combined two increases to supply of Electricity, together with the increase in the consumption price of electricity and the increase in IVA (which will only be applied from the date of IVA increase) means that residents will now have to pay 50 euros more than expected to cover the backdated period. This increase will also apply even to clients who are billed by third parties, but whose electricity is ultimately supplied by State-owned provider, Iberdrola. (Source: Tumbit)

Over many years the various governments have 'protected' the consumer in Spain from the true cost of electricity. They kept end-user regulated prices below the generators' costs. Successive governments then shied-away from passing the true cost on to the consumer because of the likely political flak. This created a tariff deficit of €24 billion which the government (or the taxpayer) now owes to the country's biggest electricity providers. The new government has promised to clear this deficit by the end of 2013. If they were to keep the tariff deficit within legal limits this year, they would have to increase the cost to the consumer by 30% for this year alone. Even though the government may securitise part of the debt to the suppliers, the price paid by the consumer will eventually have to reflect the true production costs and there is no escaping this. Brace yourself for further substantial price increases!

### Magic Mick

Magic Mick (the famous Irish magician) was playing to a packed London audience. When he came to the point in his act where he needed someone to help him, he called up the biggest, strongest-looking man he could find in the audience. When the helper came up on stage, Magic Mick handed him a large rubber mallet and said, 'When I put my head on this wooden block, hit me as hard as you can. And don't worry about hurting me - it won't affect me at all....at all. It's my act.'

The man said, 'OK, if you say so.'

So Magic Mick put his head on the block and said, 'OK, hit me now!'

Ten years later, Magic Mick woke up in a hospital bed from a coma, looked around and yelled, 'Ta-Da!'

### Local News

Many of you will still recall the savage murder of the beautiful and popular 20-year-old Irish girl, Avril Louise Flanagan, on May 29, 2009. The horrific crime took place at the Aparthotel Playa Marina in Cabo Roig. Avril, (photo) had broken-up with her boyfriend, Alan Matthew Daulby, 28, and had later called at the apartment to collect some belongings and to ask her ex-boyfriend to stop pestering her with phone calls. While there, Daulby stabbed her 53 times. Daulby burnt all the clothes he was wearing together with the rags he used to clean up the blood on waste ground. However, there was blood evidence found in the suitcase he used to carry the bloodied clothes. Dalby then drove for three hours, but was detained by police in Oliva, about 200km away. The murderer never made a statement during his three years in custody but admitted that he had destroyed two families.

In August, Dalby (photo) was sentenced to 19 years in prison, one year less than the maximum at the request of a juror, which is odd. He was also ordered to pay €10,000 compensation to Avril's family, which is nonsense, as he will never pay it! Either way, it is no compensation for the tragic loss of a young life and a daughter.



Alcampo will open its 55<sup>th</sup> hypermarket on September 26 at the new Zenia Boulevard Shopping Centre. It will be the biggest shopping centre in Alicante and its fifth in the Valencian Community. Alcampo hopes to create 1,800 new jobs locally with more than 3% of these for people with disabilities/handicaps; so Man U supporters can apply! But seriously, Alcampo - who are part of the Auchan Group - are committed to promoting and developing local products. Fresh fruit and veg will be obtained locally together with fish from Santa Pola. Alcampo already purchases more than 160 million € a year in products from Valencian suppliers.

The new hypermarket will also include a petrol station and an on-line sales service (in English) for the supermarket products. As well as a delivery service, you can pick up directly from the store where the staff will load your shopping into your car in five minutes. The new hypermarket will also stock 900 products originating from other countries such as the UK, Germany, France and Russia. So, it could be that you may never again run out of Pot Noodle, sauerkraut, snails or borscht! Prices at Alcampo are expected to be lower than Carrefour. The new store has a sales area of over 9,000 m<sup>2</sup> with more than 55,000 products. The fresh food area alone will occupy 2,500 m<sup>2</sup>.

The massive builders' suppliers/hardware store Leroy Merlin is also scheduled to open on-site at the same time.

Mercadona have just announced that they are going to absorb the new IVA increases, at least for the time being. They say they have not put up prices over the summer and that 90% of their more than 8,000 lines have the same price as a year ago, and it is only when there is an increase in the price of raw materials are these passed on to the shopper.

### A very, very naughty Tom!

Kylie Minogue, Tom Jones and Elton John were walking over a bridge. Kylie trips and gets her head jammed between the railings. With scarcely a sideways glance, Tom pulls aside her G-String, and gives her a *seeing-to*. He stands back and tells Elton, "Your turn!" Elton bursts into tears. "What's up?" asks Tom. Elton sobs, "My head won't fit through the railings!!" (S.P.)

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### Local News - continued.

We may be knee-deep in a mire of austerity but it does not seem to curtail the big spenders in the local town halls. The PSOE opposition in Torrevieja have lamented that the ruling PP town council still 'seem to be spending endlessly with impunity.' Their latest grievance is that the municipal website has cost €4,000 for the last eight months - that's a maintenance charge of €6,750 per month or €225 per day! You can check-out the website here -

<http://torrevieja.es/sal/index.aspx>

It is surprisingly dull, and unusually for a tourist destination, it does not have a version in English.



The above coat-of-arms is that of Torrevieja. On top is the Royal Crown with a diamond shape underneath, with red and yellow stripes representing the now extinct Kingdom of Aragon. Under a blue sky (obvious) is one of the galleons used to transport salt from the *salinas*. The salt-labourers cottages are indicative of early Torrevieja and the damaged watchtower (from which the town got its name) recalls the devastating earthquake that destroyed the town in 1829.



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Harry has claustrophobia and agoraphobia at the same time.  
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### The Long Wait

It was a very busy night at the restaurant. Harry places his order, but waits ages for anything to turn up. Finally, a young man arrives and starts handling out plates. 'Are you the waiter who took our order?' asks Harry. 'Yes, sir,' says the waiter. 'Funny,' says Harry, 'I was expecting someone much older.'



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### **Murphy**

A Muslim was sitting next to Murphy on a plane.  
Murphy ordered a whiskey.  
The stewardess asked the Muslim if he'd like a drink also.  
He replied in disgust "I'd rather be raped by a dozen whores than let liquor touch my lips!"  
Murphy handed his drink back and said "Me too, I didn't know we had a choice!"



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### High state subsidies to trade unions

There is no crisis for the trade unions in Spain. At least, there wasn't in 2011 when they received direct subsidies from the Spanish state adding up to over €18m.

The two major trade unions, CCOO (Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras) and UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores) received the largest subsidies of over €7m each.

The subsidies for 2011, which were published on August 16 in the Official State Bulletin (BOE), were given to the trade unions "for the realization of activities of trade union character" and to participate in the organs of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration that was replaced by the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. The total amount of €18.3m was distributed to 79 trade unions in the whole country. CCOO received €7.50m in total, while UGT received €7.38m. (Although not mentioned in the report, the larger unions also receive substantial funding from some of the regional left-wing governments such as Andalucía.)

### Preparing for a 'hot autumn'

There have been rumours about a possible merger between the two major unions, CCOO and UGT, which are preparing for a 'hot autumn' with street protests against the government's measures to tackle the economic crisis, including the labour reform, reduced unemployment benefits, reduced benefits to public sector employees and increased taxes.

The third union to have received the largest subsidies is the employers' union, Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (CEOE), which received €2.13m for its participation in the consultative organs. (Source: El Confidencial)

Meanwhile down in Andalucía, roaming gangs of left-wing activists led by a communist mayor, Sánchez Gordillo, have been raiding - what we would call shoplifting - from a number of Mercadona and Carrefour supermarkets, to supply food to the needy. In one case 20 shopping trolleys of staple foodstuffs were taken. Although the police have been called to every incident, the supermarket chains have been loath to prosecute the thieves to date.

### The Unkindest Cut

Shlomo said to his friend Moshe, 'Moshe, did I tell you that my Hetty had plastic surgery the other day?'

'No, you didn't,' replied Shlomo.

'Yes,' said Shlomo, 'I cut up her credit cards.'

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### Letters to the Editor

Can you please record our gratitude to Ed the electrician, who advertises in your enjoyable magazine. During the very hot weather all our fuses blew and could not be reset. Ed came immediately and after checking almost every wire in the house, isolated and corrected the problem.

We now have the air-conditioning back and can boil a kettle at last!

John J.

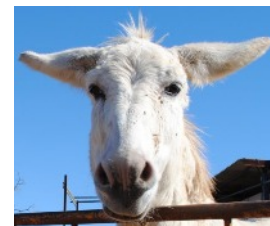
We would like to thank the security guards in Dream Hills for their professionalism and vigilance. While patrolling early one morning recently, they discovered 'Norwegian' Roger lying in his garden in a very painful condition. The appropriate services were called. Shortly afterwards a broken shoulder was diagnosed and treated in Torrevieja Hospital.

Well done, Guys!

J.J. & Rob

### Council searches for cheap white ass!

The Orihuelanos are looking for a white donkey or ass. If a new bishop for the city arrives, tradition demands that he does so sitting on a white donkey or ass. This is due to take place on September 27 and it is a big Spanish tourist event, reportedly attracting thousands, with a procession, horses, the whole *shebang*. As this has only happened three times in the last 50 years, it is considered a major local event. Interestingly it is the responsibility of the town council to produce the rare *Equus africanus asinus*, but figures being mentioned for the rental of one peak at around €2,000! (Hence the inflammatory and misleading headline.) I also see on one of the Spanish newspapers that the new bishop, Jesus Valencia Murgui, comes from Mallorca where some of his clerical colleagues there have a less than laudable opinion of him, one referring to the bishop as "*su Excelencia, el mudo*" (His Excellency, the dumb). Well, he should feel truly at home with some of our local councillors!



### Romanians

The Romanians did well at the Olympics: They took, two Gold, five Silver and two Bronze at the stadiums. Unfortunately they also took the brass, lead and iron as well.

**Golfing in Andalucia - the outlook.**

The Andalucía Government has ignored the request from the Andalucía Tourist Board, regarding the application of the higher rate of IVA/VAT on golf course charges. The maximum rate of 21% IVA will come into effect in September, in the same way as in other sports and entertainment pastimes. The previous rate has been 8%. This represents a massive increase.

The golf industry thinks that the IVA increase is a grave mistake which will send people to other golf destinations. They state that golf in the region last year brought 425,000 foreign travellers to Andalucía for the main purpose of playing golf.

The golfer tourists generally stay in Andalucía for 11.7 days, a longer time than the general tourist, and the golfers generally go out to play on a course an average 4.6 times.

For every day in Andalucía, they calculate that the golfer spends €80.31 a day, €20 more than the average of other tourists. Two thirds of tourist golfers stay in hotels, they say.

There are 106 golf courses in Andalucía, almost a quarter to the Spanish total.

**Lime Bar Golf Society Los Altos, Orihuela Costa**

The golf society's venue for the 15th August 2012 was held at the Mar Manor Golf Course.

This course is favoured by our players and was in very good condition. This resulted in the scores being fairly good and the players enjoyed a good days golf.

The competition was in the stableford format, and the scores were recorded, as follows:-

Nearest the Pin on the 2nd was Paul Abbot.

Nearest the Pin on the 8th No Winner.

Nearest the Pin on the 14th was Mick Slater.

Nearest the Pin on the 17th was Rob Adair.

Best Guest was Dale Edwards with a score of 39 points.

Silver Class runner up was Barry Shawyer with a score of 34 points.

Silver Class winner was Paul Abbot with a score of 39 points.

Gold Class runner up was George Barton with a score of 38 points.

Gold Class winner was Mick Slater with a score of 39 points.

A day's golf in pleasant company, with a thank you to Norman Dobson who manages this event for us with the assistance of Stewart Coleman; also thanks to the Staff at The Lime Bar for providing an enjoyable meal. Good luck to our new appointed Captain Mick Slater and Vice Captain Stewart Coleman.



Anyone wishing to join our friendly society please contact the Lime Bar at Via Park III Los Altos.

(Colin Clarke)



French CRS police questioning a suspected Hell's Angels drug mule.



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**Thursday's - Sarah's Bingo from 3pm**

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**PHOENIX GOLF SOCIETY**

The monthly outing was held at Autoreal Golf Club.

The course was penalizing if you strayed from the fairway as many members discovered, and with the extreme heat the members suffered with the results as follows....

Overall winner.....Dave Cahill

Gold category.....Mike Heighway

Silver category.....Ron Smith

Bronze category.....Jim Wadell

Best Guest.....Mick Slater

The nearest the pins were won by Jim Wadell and Mike Heighway.

The must try harder award went once again to Les Roundthwaite.

The next outing is Captains Day at Hacienda De Alamo on Saturday 15th September, visitors welcome.

Details of the society can be found in the Phoenix Bar, Via Park5, Dream Hills

(John Bradbeer)

**Rachel's New Ring**

Sadie was talking to her best friend Rachel. 'Is that a new ring I see you're wearing, Rachel?'

'Yes it is, Sadie,' replied Rachel. 'My husband Max bought it for me. It's special. I call it my mood ring.'

'Why do you call it that?' asked Sadie.

'Well, when I'm in a good mood it turns green, and when I'm in a bad mood, it leaves a red mark on his forehead.'



### The Pulmón de Oro.

This August, to mark the 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the Iberian bust - the Lady of Elche, a local Royal Elche society organised the first International Championships of Olive-stone Spitting. The event titled "Pulmón de Oro" or *Lung of Gold*, attracted 'athletes' from near and far....well as far as Alicante anyway. Local Elche man, Demetrio Lopez (photo), took the title with a record of 22.8 metres.



### High Winds!

Although August has been a 'scorcher,' many areas have also had to endure very high winds. In the City of Alicante, five seemingly healthy palm trees were blown down in two weeks, injuring one woman and destroying a car.



### Idiot of the Month Award

The award this month is shared by two individuals who in their own individual way have brought incompetence to new and one has to say, entertaining levels.

Work has now finished on the controversial and unpopular statue commissioned by Carlos Fabra, former President of the Province of Castellon, (now charged with fraud and a number of other offences), situated on the roundabout immediately in front of the terminal building at Castellon Airport. See photo.



The 25 metre high, 20 ton bronze sculpture has now had the scaffolding surrounding the structure removed following the placement of a stainless steel model airplane at it's highest point. Although it has been widely reported that the statue / sculpture is of the president of Aerocas (the company behind the development of the airport), Fabra, this has been denied by the artist. Barely four weeks ago headlines in the Spanish press mocked the model being manoeuvred into position, noting the "arrival of the first airplanes at Castellon Airport".

The reported cost of the sculpture has overrun the €300,000 budget by some €127,000, although none of this has yet been paid to Juan Rippolles, the artist.

Following the lavish 'opening ceremony' at the airport in March of 2011, no airplane has yet arrived at the facility, it is expected that Aerocas will forego the embarrassment of an official unveiling ceremony for the piece. The shared award this month does not go to the artist, (as all artists have an over-inflated opinion of their work anyway) but to Carlos Fabra, who once again has illustrated that not only can Valencian politicians waste massive amounts of our money, but they can also extend the borders of bad taste to incredulous levels.



A nineteenth-century wall-painting that was in the Sanctuary of Mercy Church in the ancient town of Borja in Zaragoza, has been the subject of an attempted restoration, which has been a disaster. The original painting was by the Valencian painter Elias Garcia Martinez, but it had been neglected for over a century and was in dire need of repair. Conscious of the austere times, a local 80-year-old lady, Cecilia Gimenez, threw caution to the wind, and although mindful that the 'road to Hell is paved with good intentions' decided that she would restore the painting herself. Unfortunately the result as you will see from the 'before & after' photo has been a disaster. The local mayor stated that the octogenarian from the municipality, acted on her own "without asking anyone's permission," but had "good intentions". If there is a vengeful God she is surely going straight to Hell but if it is a forgiving one, she will probably be painting the toilets in Heaven for eternity!

### High-tech Dad?

I was visiting my son and daughter-in-law last night when I asked if I could borrow a newspaper.

'This is the 21st century, Dad,' he said. 'We don't waste money on newspapers. Here, you can borrow my iPod.' I can tell you, that bloody fly never knew what hit it.

(Lee Bell & others.)

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# Fly Screens 4 U!!

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All Fly Screens 4 U products are measured, made and fitted by Michelle, with a same day service available if required. The special magnets used are UV protected and have a lifetime guarantee.

Now they are in their 8th year with countless happy customers, going from strength to strength with their new summer promotion of a gift of an electricity energy saver which could help to reduce your electricity costs and help to pay for your fly screens, on all orders over 3 windows.

We carry with us a sample window incorporating our unique flexible fly screen to demonstrate how the system works.

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**Good News?**

A young man gets engaged to the woman of his dreams. He rushes to tell his father and says, 'Dad! I've found a woman just like mother!'

His father gives him a cold stare and says, 'So what do you want: sympathy?'

## The Spanish public healthcare system - an anomaly.

The government's plan to completely exclude illegal immigrants from the public healthcare system has been adapted to include a minor concession: undocumented foreigners will be able to access medical services only under specific circumstances, or for a price.

The proposal being drawn up is similar in effect to an insurance policy for private healthcare. For the under-65s, the cost will be 710.40 euros a year, or 59.20 a month. For those over 65, the fee will rise to 1,864.80, or 155.40 euros a month. In both instances the payment will allow access only to basic state healthcare services. Costs for medicine and health transport services will be excluded and should a monthly payment be missed, the policy-holder will have their medical access suspended for three months.

As in a previous decree signed in April, minors and pregnant women are excluded from the policy system and entitled to free healthcare, except for prescription medicines when they will have to pay 40 percent of the cost.

Many regions, including Andalusia, the Basque Country and Asturias, plan to oppose the Health Ministry's order to bar the doors of surgeries to non-resident immigrants as of September. The Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians has already called on doctors to ignore the government decree.

The anomaly arises if you are a non-Spanish EU citizen living in Spain who has not paid Spanish social security payments. Under the Valencian healthcare payment system, the cost will be 270 euros per quarter for those below retirement age and 330 euros per quarter for those above it (See Dream Scene No.32). Now this means that a 'paper-less' non-pensioner illegal immigrant would pay just 59.20 euros a month for healthcare, whereas a similarly aged EU-citizen here, legally resident, would pay 90 euros per month. Makes you think!

It's so quiet out here in the wilds you can hear a mouse get a hard-on.

John Belushi

### Property news still grim and getting grimmer!

Spain desperately needs to sell a glut of new homes, and nurse its battered construction industry back to health, so what does the Government do? The one thing most likely to achieve the opposite, namely raising the cost of buying new homes by increasing VAT from 4% to 10%, adding thousands of Euros to the average new property purchase from the beginning of next year.

I wrote about this issue a couple of weeks ago, but at that stage it wasn't clear if the Government was going to raise VAT on new homes or not, having raised it on pretty much everything else, including home refurbishment from 8% to 21%, ensuring that from now on everyone will pay for home refurb's in cash. With both VAT and the tax on resales (ITP) going up, we might see a big comeback in under-the-table cash payments, also known as "B money", after years of steady decline. Tax evasion is a national sport, and this Government is going to give it a big boost. I wouldn't be surprised if they raise less tax as a consequence.

The Government has also scrapped mortgage tax relief on primary residencies, and according to analysis by Idealista.com, a property portal, the price of new primary residencies will have to fall an additional 10 to 20% if buyers are to avoid having to spend more money on a home purchase. You can read more about the increase in VAT on new homes here:

<http://www.spanishpropertyinsight.com/buff/2012/07/13/what-happens-if-government-lets-the-vat-reduction-on-new-homes-expire/>

(Source: Spanish Property Insight)

Spanish residential property sales fell by 11.4% last month, compared to July of 2011, reaching a total of 25,405 units, according to a report released yesterday by the National Institute of Statistics (INE).

After a slight recovery in 2010, sales have now fallen for a straight 16 months, with property sales falling by 17.1% overall throughout 2011.

During the property boom years up to the burst of the bubble in 2007 as many as 80,000 property transactions per month were commonplace - more than triple the level seen currently.

As prices and transactions in the housing market continue to shrink, the number of mortgages awarded has also dropped for the 26<sup>th</sup> successive month. The number of home loans in June stood at 24,321, 25.2% below the same month in 2011.

But it is not just the Spanish banks who have been throwing good money after bad here. Deutsche Bank recorded a 40.5% default in loans to the Spanish property sector at the end of June 2012. Out of 436.4 million euros in loans to the construction and real estate sectors, a whopping 187.2 million is doubtful.

The stock market has predicted nine out of the last five recessions.

(Paul Samuelson - Economist)

### Goodbye, Mom!

A young man shopping in Iceland supermarket noticed a little old lady following him around. If he stopped, she stopped. Furthermore she kept staring at him.

She finally overtook him at the checkout, and she turned to him and said, 'I hope I haven't made you feel ill at ease; it's just that you look so much like my late son.'

He answered kindly, 'That's okay.'

'I know it's silly,' she said, 'but if you'd call out "Goodbye, Mom" as I leave the store, it would make me feel so happy.'

She then went through the checkout, and as she was on her way out of the store, the man called out, "Goodbye, Mom."

The little old lady waved and sweetly smiled back at him..

Pleased and uplifted that he had brought a little sunshine into someone's day, he went to pay for his groceries.

'That comes to €121.85,' said the clerk.

'How come so much? I only bought 5 items,' said the man.

The clerk replied, 'Yes, but your Mother said you'd be paying for her things, too.'

Pete Dudman

### Keep out of the bins!

An example of how the recession is biting comes from Girona where the City Hall is locking the rubbish containers in the streets to what avoid what they said was a 'humiliating' scramble for food. Outside supermarkets the padlocks are in use as many look for items thrown out after the 'best before' date. Girona is the first city in Spain to crack down on bin scavenging. Girona Town Hall has adopted a scheme to feed the very poor, and has set up distribution centres where they can obtain essential items. In Madrid there are fines of as much as €750 for people who go through the bins because the authorities say it dirties the streets. It seems the authorities are missing the point here!



### Keep the kids off the weed!

In a recent report, Efe reports that the Cannabis Associations estimate that 2% of the Spanish population aged 15 to 64 year olds use cannabis daily, with an average monthly expenditure of 100 euros.

They believe that marijuana users in Spain invest 86.9 million euros each month to buy this substance, which represent 1,163 million a year.

In another study lasting more than 20 years, researchers have followed the lives of a group of people from Dunedin in New Zealand.

They assessed them as children - before any of them had started using cannabis - and then re-interviewed them repeatedly, up to the age of 38.

Having taken into account other factors such as alcohol or tobacco dependency or other drug use, as well the number of years spent in education, they found that those who persistently used cannabis - smoking it at least four times a week year after year through their teens, 20s and, in some cases, their 30s - suffered a decline in their IQ.

The more that people smoked, the greater the loss in IQ. The effect was most marked in those who started smoking cannabis as adolescents.

For example, researchers found that individuals who started using cannabis in adolescence and then carried on using it for years showed an average eight-point IQ decline.

Stopping or reducing cannabis use failed to fully restore the lost IQ. More info' here -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-19372456>

### Warning from British Embassy regarding rented properties.

The British Embassy warns homeowners to ensure they rent properties in accordance with Spanish law. The British Embassy has become aware of a number of cases where homeowners have been fined up to €30,000 for letting properties without the correct permits.

Last month the Embassy published advice for homeowners who rent out their properties or are considering doing so, which can be found on the UKinSpain website.

#### Short-term lets:

The regulations on letting tourist apartments (apartamentos turisticos) and holiday homes (viviendas vacacionales) vary by region. If you are planning on making a financial return by renting out your existing property, or buying one to let, you are recommended to seek independent legal advice and check the local licensing laws with your local town hall.

This is particularly important in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and Canary Islands where the rental of holiday properties on a short-term basis is strictly regulated. The authorities in these areas are cracking down on homeowners who rent out their properties to tourists (particularly through online adverts) without complying with Spanish law.

If you own or are planning to buy an apartment which is part of a Comunidad de Propietarios (Committees of property owners who are responsible for the management of communal areas of apartment buildings/complexes), you should also check whether there are any rules that prohibit or restrict short-term letting.

#### Long-term lets:

Owners who rent out properties on a long-term basis are generally not required to apply for a special licence. However, it is worth seeking professional advice to make sure that you are complying with Spanish legislation and that you are using the correct rental contract.

There are different types of contracts depending on how long the property is being let for, such as arriendos de vivienda which are for a minimum of five years, and arriendos de temporada which are generally for one year or less. You can get copies of these contracts from tobacconists (estancos).

#### Taxes:

Owners of properties should also be aware that whether or not you are resident in Spain, you will need to declare rental income to the Spanish tax authorities. Homeowners may wish to seek advice from a professional tax adviser (asesor/gestor).

#### Further information

Advice on renting out property in Spain on the UKinSpain website - <http://ukinspain.fco.gov.uk/en/help-for-british-nationals/living-in-spain/property-in-spain/before-you-buy/renting-out-property>

FAQs on letting property in Spain (in Spanish) from the Sociedad Pública de Alquiler (Public Rental Society) - [http://www.spaviv.es/informacion/faq\\_lau\\_propietario.php](http://www.spaviv.es/informacion/faq_lau_propietario.php)

Lists of local English-speaking lawyers can be found on the consular pages of the UKinSpain website.

### The Lone Ranger and Tonto

The Lone Ranger and Tonto went camping in the desert. After they got their tent all set up, both men fell sound asleep.

Some hours later, Tonto wakes the Lone Ranger and says,

'Kemo Sabe, look towards sky, what you see?'

'The Lone Ranger replies, 'I see millions of stars.'

'What that tell you?' asked Tonto.

The Lone Ranger ponders for a minute then says, 'Astronomically speaking, it tells me there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. Time wise, it appears to be approximately a quarter past three in the morning. Theologically, the Lord is all-powerful and we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What's it tell you, Tonto?'

"You dumber than buffalo-shit, Kemo Sabe. It mean someone stole the tent!"

(Pete Dudman)

### Bits & Bobs

**Adios!** To date in 2012, Spain's migration has exceeded immigration. The National Statistics Institute (INE) has shown how the economic crisis in Spain has reversed the trend with migration and immigration, with an increasing number of Spanish people deciding to try their luck abroad.

According to estimates by the INE, Spain received just 178,021 immigrants in the first 6 months of the year, compared to 269,515 leaving the country over the same period.

Based on the latest statistics, the data show that the worsening economic crisis in recent months in Spain and the high unemployment rate have doubled the number of Spanish who have opted to seek fortune in other countries.

The INE report indicates that, in 2011 the vast majority of those leaving the country went to the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Ecuador, Switzerland and Venezuela.

**Cyclists**, like pedestrians and motorcyclists, remain a vulnerable group on Spanish roads. During 2010, a total of 3,496 cyclists suffered an accident in Spain, and 67 of them died - 20% more than in 2009. This is the highest rate in Europe. Young people between 15 and 17 years and those aged between 55 and 64, are the groups with the highest rate of casualties. In Spain, two in ten cyclists have suffered an accident and most of them (77.5%) were the result of a fall according to a MAPFRE study. Currently, about 20.5 million Spanish people (mostly men under 30) have a bike, of which about three million use it almost daily and some 15 million less frequently for leisure purposes.

Unlike other European countries, in Spain, the highest concentration of accidents is recorded outside the cities.



Regarding the current travails at Spanish **banks**, Barcelona, arguably the birthplace of the modern bank, did not tolerate bankrupt bankers. According to Edwin Hunt's and James Murray's *History of Business in Medieval Europe*, under a law passed in 1321, bankers who were in default were given only bread and water and had to settle their accounts within a year. In 1360 one banker, Francesc Castello, "was beheaded in front of his own bank."



### Shortcomings in Aviation?

A consumers' organisation, CEACCU, 'The Spanish Confederation of Organisations of Housewives, Consumers and Users', has called on the Director General of Civil Aviation to investigate Ryanair and the emergency landings for lack of fuel by the three planes on the same day, July 26, in Valencia. It appears that 'Mayday' was radioed on all three occasions. El País reports that they say if irregularities are found, the airline would face a suspension of the licence to fly in Spain for as long as three years, and a fine of 4.5 million €

Ryanair spokesman, Stephen McNamara, is quoted in El País as saying all the Ryanair flights operate with fuel levels demanded by Boeing and the European Air Safety Agency. 'This includes that necessary for taxiing, when in the air, diversions in the case of unforeseen circumstances'.

El Mundo reports that the Ministry for Development has warned Ryanair that they risk losing their licence. The paper states that in two years they have more than 100 disciplinary warnings, and now there is the ongoing investigation for operating below the recommended fuel limit.

Ryanair's Spanish problems then seem to be compounded by a number of further incidents. On August 21, a Ryanair plane about to depart from Valencia for Brussels appeared to have aviation fuel squirting from one of its wings. The passengers were ordered to leave the plane and after a two and a half hour delay due to a 'minor technical breakdown', the plane took off for Brussels. Then on August 25, on a flight just about to depart from Menorca to Madrid, the pilot noticed 'an anomaly' and 180 passengers were returned to the terminal. The passengers were then kept for 12 hours in the terminal during which time an airline technician was flown from London to repair the fault. The passengers were given two € vouchers each for food and the Guardia Civil and police had to be called to placate angry passengers. More than 100 of the passengers had their complaint forms stamped by the airline before they re-boarded the plane.

But some of this may just be a smokescreen to divert attention from a number of pressing issues in Spanish aviation. The Ministry for Development has still not corrected flying security problems detected in an audit carried out in July 2010, two years after the Spanair crash in Madrid killed 154 people. El País reports that the International Civil Aviation Organisation, ICAO, which is part of the United Nations, published an audit at the time and found 40 problems in the security of the Spanish air system, linked to the Madrid Spanair crash, some of them very serious, and the Ministry now admits that these 'black holes' still persist!

On August 16, 1987, a Northwest Airlines flight taking off from a Michigan airport crashed killing 154 passengers and crew, a four-year-old child being the only survivor. (18 survived the Madrid crash.) A telex was later sent out to all the owners of this plane model, warning that the TOWS system, which is an alarm which sounds if the plane is not fit to fly, be revised. The aircraft, a McDonnell Douglas MD-82, was the same type of aircraft involved in the Madrid disaster in 2008. The TOWS system used the same fuse for heating which came on when the Spanair plane was on the ground, and it's understood that the fuse was disconnected taking the TOWS alarm out of the circuit.

Despite the crash in 1987 the manual in the Spanair plane at the time of the crash, 21 years later, made no mention of this problem. If the manual had been updated as per the warning telex in 1987, the pilots would have known that the flaps were not in the correct position for a take-off. Coincidentally, the number killed in both crashes was the same.

The minister responsible for air safety, Ana Pastor, has claimed that 77% of the deficiencies have been resolved. Now that means that 23% of the deficiencies still exist, which is scarcely reassuring! Would you drive a car with a similar record?



### The Doctors' Conference

A doctor from Israel says: "In Israel our medicine is so advanced, we cut off a man's testicles, put them into another man and in 6 weeks he's looking for work."

The German doctor comments: "That's nothing, in Germany we take part of the brain from a person, put it into another person's head and in 4 weeks he's looking for work."

A Russian doctor says: "That's nothing either. In Russia we take out half of the heart from a person, put it into another person's chest and in 2 weeks he's looking for work."

The South African doctor answers immediately: "That's nothing my colleagues, you are way behind us. In South Africa, about a year ago, we grabbed a person with no brains, no heart and no balls. We made him President of South Africa and now the entire country is looking for work!!

Mike Wigginton

(Buñol is a small town about 25 miles west of Valencia. Every year on the last Wednesday of August, the town hosts the largest food-fight in the world, when tons of tomatoes are used as ammunition. The tomatoes come from Extramadura where they are less expensive and do not make good eating. Although the town has only a population of around 9,000, this swells to around 60,000+ during the festival. The night before the food-fight, the town holds a paella-cooking competition. Many thanks to Jules for her wonderful first-hand account (I have not seen better!) of the fun and mayhem at the festival.)



After a four hour drive to Buñol in Valencia, we parked-up on a makeshift car park to pitch our tent. This was not in our original plan but all the other campsites were full. We hadn't been asleep for long when we were awoken by music playing full blast on the car park. This was just the beginning of the days events and it was just six in the morning! By 7 am we packed away our tent and the four of us began to walk the streets and head towards the main part of the town where the tomato fight - La Tomatina - was being held. The streets were lined with hundreds of people of many different nationalities, all in wonderful humour and looking forward to taking part in the fight.

As we reached the top of the main street there were lots of stalls selling goggles, t-shirts etc. Everybody was dancing to the loud music, the atmosphere was amazing. Some people were still sleeping in their cars, some on car roofs, others on building roofs and even some in the streets! Coaches were now pulling up every second, adding more people to an already packed town. It was now 9:30 am, just 90 minutes before the cannon was due to go off to herald the start of the fight.



We followed the crowds further along the street making our way to the main town square. There were stalls after stalls along the way selling bocadillos and beer with lots of barbecues selling hot food as well. There seemed to be a food & drink stall outside every house and in the adjoining side streets.

On reaching the town square it was CHAOS! The square was heaving with people with some dancing in cages. People were holding hose pipes from the apartment windows above spraying water down to try to keep everyone cool, it was around 40°! The streets were very narrow and we were squeezing through the crowds. By now the noise was deafening and the atmosphere was electric.

A huge greased pole was placed in the middle of the square with a very large piece of ham at the top. People were trying to climb to the top of this pole and get the ham - almost impossible - but everyone was having a go, boys, men,



ladies, all climbing over each others shoulders in desperation, the crowd cheering encouragement. Ten minutes to go before the first truck with the tomatoes arrives, people are wearing swimming caps, goggles and trainers. We made the mistake of wearing flip-flops which were definitely not up to the job.

The first truck, with 40,000 tomatoes, is driving slowly towards us and everyone is screaming and shouting. The cannon goes off



and OH MY GOD! Thousands of tomatoes are being thrown - people are supposed to squash them before throwing but few do - tossing them whole - everyone's gone crazy! The second truck arrives with more tomatoes, then a third and it goes on and on and on. My arms are now aching and my goggles have been knocked sideways and upwards. The smell of the tomatoes is beginning to make me sick. Eventually the last couple of trucks arrive. By now I can only see red - red streets, red walls and red bodies - everyone is ankle deep in tomatoes. One truck stops within touching distance of us and just tips its load of tomatoes at our feet! People are now swimming in the tom's as the last truck arrives to dump its load. By now I'm physically sick with the smell of tomatoes and I need to get out. The four of us hold onto one another desperately trying to find a way out. People must have noticed the four of us trying to get away so they now deliberately target more tomatoes at us. Heads down, gripping each other, with our feet sliding on the sloppy streets in our useless flip-flops, with our mouths closed we struggle on - I've eaten enough of them!



Eventually I can breath. Not one of us has a white piece of flesh left! My hair is just one matt of squelchy tomatoes. Even more people lined the streets to watch everyone making their way to the firing line. There were newspaper reporters and TV cameras, all who seemed shocked at the sight of us. Out of the many thousands that were there, we four must have looked the worst! We were stopped every second to pose for photos; many people were laughing while others were horrified. The younger ones were rubbing themselves against us to cover themselves in tomatoes. We were desperate to get washed down at this stage, standing under any hosepipe from people's windows.



Making our way back through the streets everyone was still jeering and cheering, barbecues burning full force and buckets of ice with beers. Through all this a bride in a white wedding dress and trail walks through the crowds, bridesmaids in tow! Is she mad?

After posing for more photos we head back to the makeshift car park. We were told that they had communal showers, only to find they meant men holding hosepipes! Luckily, I was wearing a swimsuit under the clothes I was about to throw away. In between my swimsuit and flesh I was wearing a layer of sloppy squashed tomatoes. My hair smelt rotten and was stuck to my scalp. My son's friend had his goggles knocked-off and sported a nice little shiner. Kev's cheeks were swollen from repeated hits and I was still retching from the smell of tomatoes.



Next year I think that I will just be a spectator but the other three can't wait to do it all over again.

Definitely the experience of a lifetime!

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**Mabel's Tale**

Mabel is caught shoplifting and sent to court. 'And what did you steal?' asks the the magistrate.

Mabel says, 'A bunch of bananas, Your Honour.'

'How many bananas was that?' asks the magistrate.

'There were five bananas in the bunch' she replied.

'I see,' says the magistrate. 'In that case, I think a sentence of five months would be appropriate.'

Mabel's husband calls out from the back of the court, 'She also stole a bunch of grapes.....'

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**The Impuesto sobre Bienes Inmuebles - IBI - (the Spanish Property Tax) is due for payment this year before October 5, 2012. This is a tax payable to the local municipality and can vary substantially from area to area. For example, the IBI paid to Torre Vieja Town Hall is almost twice what is payable in Orihuela for a similar property. This year, however, the central government in Madrid has instructed all town councils throughout Spain to increase the annual amount of IBI payable by 10%. This is to compensate in part for the cut-back in payments from central government.**

**Why? Why? Why?**

Why do they lock petrol station toilets? Are they afraid someone will clean them?

Why do people point to their wrist when they're asking you the time? Do I point to my crotch when I ask people where the toilet is?

Why does mineral water that 'has trickled through mountains for centuries' have a sell-by date?

Why don't we ever see the headline 'Psychic Wins Lottery'?

Why do they sterilise lethal injections?

Why can't a woman put on mascara with her mouth closed?

Why did kamikaze pilots wear helmets?

Why don't they make the rest of the airplane out of whatever they make the black box out of?

Why is it called 'tourist season' if you can't shoot at them?

**Age Concern España** now have a website in English.  
 You can find it at [www.acespana.org](http://www.acespana.org)

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