

THE DREAM SCENE

NEWSLETTER

Helping to keep expat's informed.....and smiling.

Issue no. 82 1st of December 2013.

Bienvenido a todos and welcome to the December edition.

You can always tell when winter arrives on the Costa Blanca; the hookers on the roundabouts start wearing leggings and the politicians in Alicante and Valencia keep putting their hands in their own pockets to keep warm. Once again it is the rapidity of the change between seasons that has been surprising. We seemed to move from summer to winter in just a few days, with the corresponding drop in temperatures. No such thing as autumn anymore, or so it seems.

No good news coming from Spain at the moment. Inside, you will find that *Fagor* has entered bankruptcy proceedings. Many of you will have a *Fagor* fridge or freezer in your kitchen. They were built to cope with the Spanish climate, an essential requirement here. The tragedy is that many of the workers there put up their homes etc, to guarantee loans for the cooperative and it is very likely that they will lose them. You can also read inside about the demise of the Valencian public broadcasting system. Across the country the autonomous television stations take €800 million of taxpayers money every year, for an audience of just 8.6%. What's more, in each region of a 'political colour' the regional station promotes that 'colour.' The total debt of the entire regional television channels is stated to have reached about €3 billion. I believe this figure is grossly understated and just wishful thinking.

Around 2,500 people in Madrid are sleeping rough in tunnels, bank cash-machine rooms and under bridges. The figure is higher for the Valencian Community. 1.4 million homes had their electricity cut-off in Spain in 2012, so not everybody is going to enjoy their Christmas this year.

Late News: The Spanish oil giant Repsol is expected to end an 18-month dispute by approving Argentina's offer of \$5 billion as compensation for seizing Repsol's 51% stake in Argentine energy company YPC. It's less than half of what Repsol asked for—and not in cash but Argentine government bonds, which are about as useful as a chocolate teapot!

Lots more inside including another helpful and informative article by Lee Bell; Spanish property news; the new Citizen Security Law; various bits of tax info' for expat's and the return of the history article.

Don't forget: The JB Brass Band (the artists formerly known as Just Brass!), will be performing at 6pm at Zenia Boulevard on December 1; well worth a visit!

Also a Petanca Fun Day is being held in aid of the Torrevieja Stroke Support Group on Monday December 9, on and near The lounge Bar in Lago Jardin II. There will be 'Bring & Buy' sale at 11am, Raffles, Quiz, Killer Darts, DJ Aid & Burgers 'n' Hot Dogs. The Fun Petanca Competition starts at 2pm and there are lots of prizes with teams drawn from the hat. It promises to be a great day, so don't miss out.

Thanks to Barry & Carol and the Olivers, for their kind donations. Remember, the Dream Scene subscription begins in March each year, not January.

I promised to say 'Hello' to David and Aaron & Delia. December 6, Constitution Day, and December 25, Christmas Day, are National Holidays in Spain. Dec' 26th is a normal day here.

A Happy Christmas from the Dream Scene team and all our advertisers to all our readers.

We hope we will see you soon. Mick & Tid

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Did you know that

... the Spanish Health Service is recommending that the 18,500 women in Spain with PIP breast implants arrange to immediately remove them. The PP breast implants are now considered to be fraudulent and dangerous. Recipients in France have started to sue.

...Spain's new legislation permitting consumers to change their fixed-telephone number contract between operators, yet keep their number, within the same working day came into force on November 11. The procedure could previously take up to a maximum of five working days. The implementation of the measure had been delayed since first being announced back in June due to Orange Spain's failure to complete the required technical changes in time. This resulted in the operator being hit with a fine of €96,000, which could increase to €20 million depending upon the outcome of the investigation by the CNMC Spanish Telecoms regulator. Same-day porting of number has been in force since June 1st.

...you now have to have an appointment if you want to go to *Trafico* in Alicante. Go to www.dgt.es and then to *Cita Previa Para Trámites* towards the bottom left-hand side of the page and follow the instructions.

...every day in the Valencian Community, an average of 50 people are charged by police for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

...men with prostate cancer who ate a low-fat diet and took fish oil supplements had lower levels of pro-inflammatory substances in their blood and a lower cell cycle progression score, a measure used to predict cancer recurrence, than men who ate a typical Western diet, UCLA researchers discovered. You can read more details here - <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/11/131118133048.htm>



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The Prestige Affair: In A Coruña, Galicia, in the north of Spain, if your dog craps in the street and you fail to pick it up you can be fined up to €300! However, if you are responsible for a massive environmental disaster, you can sleep easy as it appears you will neither face jail or fines.

In November 2002, a Greek-operated, single-hulled tanker, The Prestige (photo-Guardian), containing 77,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil - which was flying a Bahamas flag, had a Liberian owner, a Greek captain and had been chartered by a Swiss-based Russian oil company - split into two parts and sank 150 miles off the Galician coast of Spain. It quickly became Spain's worst environmental disaster. More than 1,000 beaches across Spain and France were polluted and the local fishing industry was destroyed in the disaster.



On November 13, 2002, one of its twelve tanks burst during a storm off Galicia, in northwestern Spain. Fearing that the ship would sink, the captain called for help from Spain, with the normal expectation that the vessel would be brought into harbour. However, pressure from the authorities forced the captain to steer the embattled ship away from the coast and head northwest. Reportedly after pressure from the French government, the vessel was once again forced to change its course and head southwards into Portuguese waters in order to avoid endangering France's southern coast. Fearing for its own shore, the Portuguese authorities promptly ordered its navy to intercept the ailing vessel and prevent it from approaching further. With the French, Spanish and Portuguese governments refusing to allow the ship to dock in their ports, the integrity of the single-hulled oil tanker deteriorated quickly, and in the early morning of November 19, the tanker broke into two, sinking to a depth of 3,500 metres, releasing oil with more than 80% of the oil eventually reaching the Spanish coast.

The disaster was worse than the Exxon Valdez with the beach cleaning alone costing around €2.8 billion. Thousands of volunteers flocked to the beaches and a remarkable restoration effort was coordinated WITHOUT the help of the local PP Galician and the then national PP governments, the latter of which lied about the amount of oil which would reach Spanish shores and other key facts, preferring to bury their heads. It is a tribute to the tireless and Herculean work of the volunteers that just one year after the disaster, Galicia was awarded more Blue Flags for its beaches than before.

Finally, in November 2013 after nine years, three High Court judges concluded it was impossible to establish criminal responsibility. The captain was however accused of disobeying government authorities who wanted the 26-year-old tanker as far from the coast as possible and given a nine-months suspended sentence for disobedience. The captain was 78 at the time of the disaster. Although the court absolved the government of any blame and confirmed their actions, anybody who knows anything about this type of disaster agreed that the ship should have been allowed to dock in a Spanish port where the damage could be contained and the oil collected locally. The decision to force the ship further out to sea was a disastrous one. After the 10-year investigation, El País has described the court decision as 'another shipwreck.' The state will not see a single cent of the more than four billion euros it was demanding from those responsible for the Prestige oil spill of 2002, given that no-one has been found guilty of causing the shipwreck, the ensuing oil slick nor the subsequent damage. Nor will the state be paying out any compensation to the victims, since the decision to keep the damaged tanker away from the coast 'was not reckless', according to the court ruling. Galicians have resigned themselves to the fact that nothing has been learned from the disaster and that the 'elites' continue to be protected.

The ABC newspaper reports that the big UGT union in Andalucía has designed a manual on how to cover up your love bites. A union leader confessed they had so much money they did not know what to do with it. Two newspapers reported that the union used money from the Junta originally destined for the unemployed to fund trips to the Caribbean and to renovate their offices. €3,000 was also spent on balloons! Legal aid funds were also diverted. Speaking on television, the UGT union leader, Cándido Méndez, had said he had considered resigning because of all the corruption in the union - but of course he won't!

The crisis has driven the per capita income level in Valencia back to the level it was in 1999. Since 2008, around 278,000 businesses in Spain have failed.

Spain's Finance Ministry has paid €13.38 billion to settle the unpaid bills of regional and local governments as the country struggles with the economic crisis. By paying the suppliers of goods and services to 10 of Spain's 17 autonomous regions, the central government has cleared a backlog which should pave the way for a new law to come into effect next year, it said. The law will require local authorities to pay suppliers of goods and services within 30 days. I believe few will comply with it or be able to comply with it. The Ministry paid the bills themselves because they were afraid that the regions would divert the funds to other recipients. Spain's regions have control over their own health and education budgets and have been under pressure to make savings as the central government enforces spending cuts to hit EU-imposed deficit targets. Payment delays have particularly hit healthcare goods suppliers to pharmacists and hospitals.

Last month I put the Spanish Ministry for Finance in the 'idiot' category for over-reporting debt by €10 billion. This month I must also include the Bank of England. It seems that they reported the figure for unsecured lending (credit cards etc) for September as £411 million whereas £864 for the month was the accurate figure. Drinking too much tea over there!

Barcelona F.C. have extended to 2016 a deal with UNICEF under which the La Liga side pay €1.5 a year to display the name of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund on the back of their shirts. The club used to have the UNICEF name on the front of their shirts, which made them one of the few sides in soccer not to display a corporate logo. They agreed a sponsorship deal with Qatar Sports Investment worth €30 million a season in 2011 and the shirt fronts now feature the name of airline Qatar Airways.

The Basque Government has said it cannot help the cooperative Fagor, a household name in Spain for kitchen appliances. The cooperative has applied for bankruptcy and will now enter into liquidation. The CEO of Fagor says 1,700 people will lose their jobs, their savings and their assets. The employees in the white goods factory initially invested €22 million into the cooperative, although later they borrowed another 80 million. The law says they must respond by selling their homes and the rest of their wealth. The cooperative has run up a total debt of €1.2 billion!

Microsoft has admitted it is negotiating with Real Madrid to sponsor the Santiago Bernabeu stadium. The Bill Gates Company wants to see the stadium renamed 'Microsoft'.

The Socialists held their party congress in early November. The right wing paper La Razón reported that the Socialist Congress witnessed booring at the mention of the Royal Family; the *Internationale* was sung, and there were verbal attacks on the church. The paper says the Socialist leader proclaims the party has 'returned' and wants to take religion out of the classroom. With an unemployment rate of around 27% you would think they could come up with something more constructive.

4 What's Up? continued

Chaos continues at the Gibraltar - Spain border. The Spanish Customs and Police authorities continue to be obstructive. The queues for cars entering the Spanish side are between two and four hours and around 30 minutes minimum for pedestrians. The Spanish cross-border workers association ASCTEG said Spain was using its citizens as "cannon fodder" in pursuit of its sovereignty goals. In a statement, the association said the frontier crossing between Gibraltar and Spain had become "a third world border". An EU inspection team has just reported that the controls on the Spanish side of the border are not illegal! The tension continues.

Electronic cigarettes — e-cigarettes — will be available for purchase in tobacco stores in Spain after the commissioner for the marketing of tobacco decided they should be listed under "smoking articles," meaning that they can be sold without the express authorization of the government. The CiU Catalan nationalist coalition asked the government last month to regulate e-cigarettes and to organize a campaign in cooperation with the regions to inform citizens about possible health consequences of their use.

The European Commission approved a directive last month that decided e-cigarettes should not be marketed as a medication, something the companies that make them feared due to the raft of requisites that would impose on their production and sale. But it did impose restrictions similar to those on regular cigarettes, preventing advertising and their sale to minors. The decision on whether or not e-cigarettes, which produce a vapor rather than smoke, should be exempt from smoking bans was left up to the discretion of member nations. The Observer newspaper in September published evidence that the Philip Morris tobacco company spent 140 million euros and deployed 161 lobbyists in a bid to mould the directive to its own interests. The directive can still be modified as it is yet to be approved by the European Commission.

Eight Catalan regional policemen, the Mossos, have been secretly filmed separately by two people in nearby apartments arresting a Barcelona man and beating him while he was on the ground. The man later died in hospital and the policemen have been indicted. They are also charged with trying to destroy evidence. I have seen the video of the assault which clearly shows the eight policemen holding the man down as one policeman continuously knees the prostrate man. The autopsy reported that the man died as a consequence of multiple blows to the head, but failed to determine their origin.

El Mundo reports that the Francisco de Victoria Judges Association has accused the PP and PSOE of forming a pact in the General Commission for Judicial Power, 'to control the judges and to cover up their corruption'.

Seven hundred women in Spain died as result of domestic violence by their husbands or boyfriends over the last 10 years, according to figures from a Spanish sociological research centre. Former Prime Minister Zapatero came up with regulations to end violence against women in 2004. The government set up an organisation dedicated to combating the problem, however not much progress has been made and the incidence of violence, often fatal, remains disturbingly high. The Centre stated that over 600,000 a year face domestic violence, while less than 25% make any official complaint. Women from all social backgrounds, immigrants to students alike living in villages or cities are facing domestic violence. Almost one million children over the last 10 years were also victims of domestic violence - just this year to date, 45 women and four children were murdered.

Five ex-directors of the CAM, Caja Mediterráneo savings bank, have been detained regarding their businesses in the Caribbean. El Mundo says it involves the purchase and sale of land abroad for personal gain, with money from CAM.

The Gibraltar football team marked their historic debut in UEFA by holding Slovakia to a goalless draw. Until their pitch is extended in Gib' hopefully by 2016, the team's home-ground will be the Estadio Algarve in Portugal; space in Gibraltar is at a premium and they may never have a 'home' ground.

Razor wire has once again been placed atop the six-metre border fencing between Mellila and Morocco in the Spanish enclave in North Africa. The razor wire was removed in 2007 because of the scale of the injuries it inflicted on people trying to climb the fence. This situation had led to protests in Spain and internationally. At the same time as the wire was introduced, the fence was raised from three metres in height to six. The razor wire will only be applied to a third of the 11Km fencing. This year there have been mass attempts to storm the wire, in one case over 300 storming the fence with 100 succeeding in entering the enclave. To reinforce the fence further still, mesh netting will be installed which will make it harder for would-be immigrants to climb and a second patrol helicopter will be deployed. However, in mid-November the Spanish Attorney General has ordered a probe into the 'legality' of the razor wire.

What is it with these 72-year-olds? Last month we reported on the 72-year-old 'Biggles' who crashed his plane into a pylon next to a runway in Alicante. Well, they are at it again! This time another 72-year-old, a British man this time, crashed his paraglider into a very rocky area of the Sierra Alhamilla near Almeria. Fortunately there were two men in the area at the time, who carried the man to an area which an ambulance could reach. Look, you old codgers, stop trying to play Doug Bader or 'Top Gun.' Stay on the ground and break your hip falling down the steps of the pub like the rest of us. It's much safer in the long run!



Then there was the silly 66-year-old British surfer who took his board out in the high winds in early November. He went missing for a while but was later rescued by a couple of Red Cross boats. He was found safe but suffering from hypothermia. No cure for dumb though.

A High Court judge has ordered the former chairman of the Spanish beer maker Damm, Demetrio Carceller Coll, and his son and current chairman Demetrio Carceller Arce to deposit a combined total of 764 million euros as a civil bond for possible charges and fines they face in connection with an alleged case of tax fraud and money laundering. Tax Agency officials alleged Carceller Coll may have failed to pay 42.3 million euros in personal income tax in the period 2001-2009 and 29.7 million in wealth tax. So the next time you are quietly sipping your Estrella Damm and contemplating life's vicissitudes in a local hostelry, be rest assured that part of what you paid for your beer is probably winding its way to some offshore hide-away in the Caribbean.

A 54-year-old Spanish businessman was arrested by police after it was revealed that he was paying two Moroccans an hourly rate of €1.17 per hour, for ten hours a day, six days a week. Two Romanians who also worked for the Spanish man received a much higher income of €600 a month for just five hours work a day, six days a week. Spain's legal minimum wage is €752.85 per month in 12 payments or €645.30 per month in 14 payments. This equates to €21 a day.

Sometimes I think the Catalans have 'lost the plot.' A cyclist was riding to work through Sabadell in Catalonia and eating a breakfast croissant at the same time. A local policeman waved him down and gave him a fine of €100 for careless driving! The cyclist plans to appeal but what happens if he has a repeat offence. He can't have points deducted can he? Maybe they will just let the air out of one of his tyres or take his saddle away. Ouch!

I'm filthy stinking rich - well, two out of three ain't bad.

Emo Phillips

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There is nothing in the world more reassuring than an unhappy lottery winner. Tony Parsons

Two out of every five properties being newly built in the Alicante Province are in the Orihuela Municipality. From what I can see locally, this is mainly on the coastal areas, one particularly large development being opposite Zenia Boulevard.

Orihuela Town Hall were obliged to pay €157,333 plus interest to the family of a man who drowned at Cala Capitán in July 2007. The man drowned at around 10:30am, when he and another man tried to rescue a girl who got into serious trouble in strong currents. There were no lifeguards on the beach and no red flag was showing. The working hours of the lifeguards according to the town hall were between 11:00 - 20:00, but the working hours on the lifeguards' hut were shown as 10:00 - 20:00. No contract for the period could be found to prove the working hours. The unfortunate incident happened during the period that the PP ruled the council and neither the town hall nor the Red Cross could produce a contract. According to the Elche court ruling, the lifeguard service was not working as it should have and the council was responsible for it. The current council may not appeal the court decision.

Orihuela town hall have been fined €300,000 during the last two years for the deficient treatment of sewage by the River Segura water authority. The council managed to get the fines reduced to €60,000 but complain that it is the regional government-run EPSAR who build and run the sewage treatment plants who should be fined. EPSAR have invested 40 million euros in the Torrevieja system but have not invested a cent in Orihuela during the past 10 years.

The green (garden) rubbish collection service has been coming in for a lot of criticism in the Orihuela district lately. So much so that the council carried out an investigation. They found that gardening companies and self employed gardeners from neighbouring municipalities were dumping their garden waste in Orihuela Costa. Offenders from San Miguel de Salinas, Torrevieja, Pilar de Horadada and San Pedro de Pinatar have been identified. (Other boroughs are not as generous as Orihuela when it comes to charging for the disposal of the rubbish.) It was also alleged that one of the offending companies was a close relative of the former PP mayoress for Orihuela, Monica Lorente. The mayor, Sr Guillén stated that the existing collection service - twice a week in every urbanisation - should be sufficient in the summer, providing residents and holiday makers cooperate.

PP-run Torrevieja have increased a number of taxes locally. Although one in five shops have closed there due to the crisis, the council intends to increase the fees for licensing new business by more than 8%. Tow-away fees, planning permission charges and many other local taxes have also increased, but the real 'biggy' has been the council tax charges for plots in the municipal cemetery which have been increased by 95.52%! All this despite the assurance from the mayor that they would be no tax increases. But what is really going to hit the town is the recent judgement from by the Supreme Court which forces the town to pay more than €15 million to a businessman in relation to a transaction in 1987 concerning land part of which is now being used for the Health Centre. The land value then was € million, the additional six million being interest since then. This problem arose when the Socialists were in an absolute majority in the council. This is a severe economic setback for the town, according to a spokesperson, which will certainly place a greater burden on the local taxpayers. The mayor, Dolón, then stated, 'It is a nonsense that this will affect the quantity and quality of the public services provided by the City Council.' What world does this guy live in? Dolón then annoyed the opposition parties further when, as he was showing a group of schoolchildren around the council chamber, he told them that they were better educated/cleverer than many of the adults who normally occupy the chamber. That was never in doubt, Mayor.

The only time my wife and I had a simultaneous orgasm was when the judge signed the divorce papers.

Woody Allen

Not really local, but the residents of La Nucía, which is north of Benidorm have been marching in the streets against the PP town mayor who has been in power since 2001. The problems this town is facing is similar to many others in the region where tax payers are having to fork-out more for less. La Nucia has the most expensive water rates in the region and one of the highest IBI rates too. A resident in a 1970's flat in the town centre has to pay €750 IBI tax annually plus over €200 for the rubbish collection (basura). More recently a huge water rate rise - approved by the council - has seen water bills rocket from €60 for three months to €100 every two.

Better late than never, I suppose. The rubbish collection company, Urbaser, stopped emptying rubbish bins in Mazarrón, Murcia, in 1998. The reason? The municipality didn't pay the bills because of a disagreement with the company. The total debt including interest is now €8,545,721. Now, 18 years later, Mazarrón Town Hall has finally agreed to pay the amount owing at the rate of €150,000 every month for the next five years.

The public money wasted by the Valencian regional government continues to come home to roost. The troubled Ciudad de la Luz film studios in Alicante will now close because of lack of use and lack of a buyer. The cost of maintaining the facility is estimated at €50,000 per month. The facility will receive a further €8 million of taxpayers money next year to pay wages, expenses and the interest on the massive debt run up while it was being built.

Ryanair is now taking steps to improve their customer service based on the opinions of travellers, such as flights silent before 8.00 and after 21.00, but convey one second small hand luggage (bag lady or duty free bag with a bottle of wine or similar), reduced charges reprint the boarding pass for those who have made online billing and standard checked baggage, as well as offer "web cleaner", to expedite the process of purchase.

An extra nine million euros is being injected into the health service to reduce waiting times for surgery in the Valencia Region. Vice-president José Císcar said more than 7,000 patients will be sent to private hospitals and clinics before the end of the year. He stated that those who have suffered the longest waits will be given the option have their operation at 15 such centres including Levante Benidorm, Clínica Benidorm, IMED-Elche and Quirón hospital in Torrevieja.

Orihuela town hall intend to introduce a new bylaw regulating mobile phone masts. Measurements have been taken to measure the microwatts of radiation emanating from some of these mast installations. International health organisation advise that these levels should not exceed 30 microwatts, but level readings in many areas of Orihuela are grossly excessive - up to 6,600 microwatts in the Desamparados district. The town hall says it will offer the companies council plots away from homes for their masts and remove all illegal masts.

The insomniac.

A trade union leader went to his doctor for help in getting to sleep. The doctor was reluctant to put the union leader on sleeping pills until other remedies had been tried and so he asked the man to lie quite still in bed at night and count sheep.

The union leader did this, but by the time he'd counted the twenty-seventh sheep, they'd all gone on strike for shorter hours and lower fences.



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The golf societies venue for the 13th November 2013 was held at the Roda Golf Course.

With 30 players in attendance they all assembled on the tee and in respect of Remembrance Week a Minute's Silence was observed, with a reading given by Dave Railton. The course was in very good condition but demanding and although a few players had not played it before, the scores were favourable.

The competition was in the Stapleford format and the scores recorded were as follows -

Nearest the Pin on the 2nd Hole (par 3) was Les Henderson.

Nearest the Pin on the 4th hole (par 3) was Tony Jones.

Nearest the pin on the 11th hole (par 3) was Tim Ryan.

Nearest the pin on the 16th hole (par 3) was Mike Highway

Best guest was Vidal Fjeld with a score of 27.

Silver Class 3rd place was Tony Jones with a score of 26 points.

Silver Class 2nd place was Barry Shawyer with a score of 26 points (on count-back).

Silver Class 1st place was Ken Sutton with a score of 28 points.

Gold Class 3rd place was Pat Heaney with a score of 31 points.

Gold Class 2nd place was Tim Ryan with a score of 34 points.

Gold Class 1st place was Les Henderson with a score of 35 points.

Shot of the 'Day' ! Jim McGregor and 'Strongest Golfer' Chris Rowlands explanation unavailable.

A very good day in pleasant company; thank you to Captain Mick Slater for organising the event and mentioning Mick's wife Angie who helps considerably behind the scenes. Also thanks to the Staff at The Lime Bar and ladies for a most enjoyable meal. Anyone wishing join our friendly society just needs to phone Mick on 659866468.



Harry Vardon: 'What should I take here?'
Caddie: 'Well, sir, I recommend the 4:05 train.'

PROPERTY SALES DWINDLE AS SAREB STUMBLES.

Spain is biting the bullet and starting to recognize the staggering level of losses associated with its housing bust.

Fitch Ratings analysts who watch the market for Spanish mortgage bonds—packages of home loans that are sold off to investors—say financial institutions are starting to unload repossessed properties at a faster pace. During the first half of the year, 44% of repossessed properties had been sold, compared 31% at the end of last year.

Now bear in mind there are very few people in Spain who even want to think about buying a house. (Spain's economy is in horrific shape. Unemployment is perched at more than 26%, and about 4.8 million people are jobless.) So in order to sell these properties, prices have to come way down.

This is a painful process of recognizing an ugly real estate reality: There are far more houses than buyers. The result? Sales of repossessed properties were on average done at prices 71.5% lower than where the houses were originally valued. That means the average price for a property that was originally sold for €100,000 in say, 2006, repossessed and then sold during the first half of 2013, would have brought a price of €28,500. "This trend is indicative of a willingness to offload properties in possession more quickly and to accept deeper discounts," Fitch analysts wrote.

You could argue that that this is a good sign. When you have a banking collapse, which Spain did, the banks at some point have to recognize the full extent of their losses and build a new stable base of capital that they can use to start lending again. (If banks don't lend, developed economies have a very difficult time growing.)

But Spain is really just starting this process. With few buyers, the pace of sales is incredibly slow.

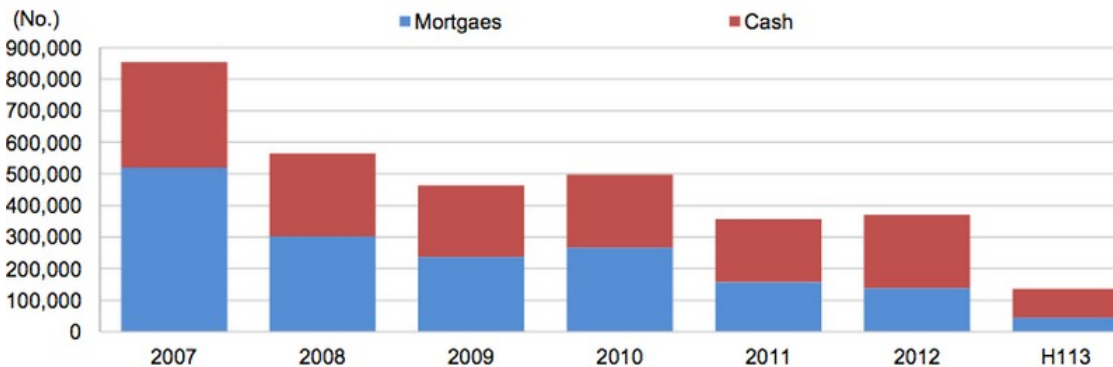
SAREB, the country's government-owned "bad bank," created in 2012 to take the most toxic properties off the hands of the banks, is already looking like it will miss its target of selling off some 45,000 houses over the next five years.

That's because it faces a very tough balancing act. If it sells the houses for discounts that are too deep, it risks collapsing what's left of the housing market. (Not to mention inflicting new losses on the banking system and itself, which might require another embarrassing trip to the European powers-that-be with hat in hand.) On the other hand, if Sareb refuses to let prices fall to the level that encourages buying, it's doing very little to help Spain get back on its feet.

So what's the answer? Basically, the size of Spain's banking crisis required a bigger, politically unpalatable bailout from the European policy makers writing the checks. The only other option is to allow Spain to slowly grind through its national real estate losses and let the banks try to absorb them over time, a process that stifles lending and chokes off economic growth.

This approach is the one Japan chose after its own real estate bubble busted in the early 1990s. It's a recipe for decades of terrible economic conditions. But that seems to be what Europe is cooking up. (Matt Phillips, Quartz.)

Comment: As reported in last month's newsletter, SAREB's initial foray into the market has been disappointing. They may now repackage bundles of the assets they want to offload, hoping to make them more attractive to the investor. However don't expect SAREB to over-discount these bundles yet. Over the 15 years SAREB has to dispose of all of its assets, its main objective will be to maximise its profitability. SAREB was established as a condition set by the European Union in exchange for aid of up to 100 billion euros to the Spanish banking sector, primarily with a view to improving the availability of credit in the economy. To date, as the chart below shows, there is no evidence of this.

Property Sales

Source: Spanish Public Notary Association

(For those viewing the bar graph on the left in black & white, the bottom section of the bar indicates 'mortgages' (misspelt on the chart), while the whole bar - both colours - reports on cash purchases, still the majority.)

S&P SEES SPANISH HOUSE PRICES CONTINUING TO FALL INTO 2016.

In a report released in early November, S&P, (Standard & Poor's) predicted that house prices this year would decline 8%, followed by a fall of 5% in 2014 and 1% in 2015. It noted while the country has emerged from its longest recession in decades, this has been on the back of stronger exports.

The agency said that unemployment remains high at just under 26%, while wages have fallen as a result of the process of internal devaluation to restore Spain's competitiveness. It said further wage cuts as part of this trend seem "probable." It further pointed to the fact that household debt levels remain high.

As a result, S&P said there is insufficient "solvent demand" to absorb the estimated stock of unsold homes as of the end of 2012 of 635,000, 30% of which are in the hands of the country's lenders and the so-called SAREB bad bank, set up to absorb the toxic real estate assets of the banking sector.

S&P also warned that the pace at which SAREB sells the stock of homes it has acquired will weigh on house prices in the coming years, with the lack of "solvent demand" making the task of the asset management corporation harder.

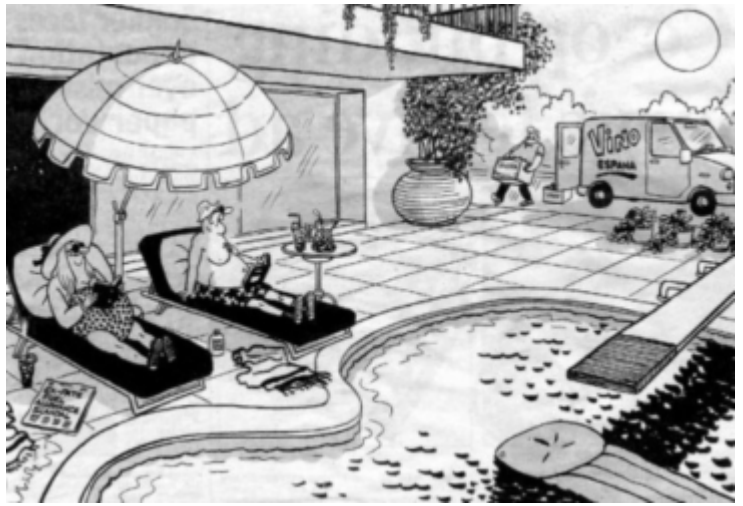
It said it sees the target SAREB has set itself of 45,000 home sales in the next five years, including 7,500 this year, as very challenging, as witnessed by the limited number of transactions it has completed since the start of 2013.

The agency expects SAREB and banks with a significant portfolio of unsold homes to divest themselves of these real estate assets in a gradual manner in order to avoid a collapse of the market. However, it is noted a process of gradual divestment would be hard to manage and if it were to be speeded up it could lead to double-digit falls in prices in the period 2013-2014.

(El Pais)

Winter Fuel Allowance for expat's to be withdrawn.

It seems that the Winter Fuel Allowance will be withdrawn from the 50,000 benefiting expat pensioners in Spain. The UK's Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith said, "The huge increase equates to a near doubling in costs to the British taxpayer and follows a ridiculous ruling by the European Court of Justice. The winter fuel payment is intended to help British pensioners with heating costs. From winter 2015-16, we are changing the rules so that it no longer goes to people in European Economic Area countries with an average winter temperature higher than the warmest part of the UK." This means pensioners who live in Spain, France, Portugal, Greece, Malta, Gibraltar and Cyprus will no longer have entitlement. Tory MP Dominic Raab said, "If you can afford to move abroad, for retirement or work, it's not clear why taxpayers at home should be coughing up benefit payments."



'Oh goody! Here comes our winter fuel!'

UK Tax Raid on Overseas Nationals & Expats

Thousands of Britons living abroad face being caught up in a tax raid on wealthy foreigners buying and selling property in the UK.

George Osborne, the Chancellor, is preparing to announce that capital gains tax will be charged on British property sold by overseas nationals and expats.

The Coalition plan was disclosed by Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, who said that the proposals would ensure that wealthy foreigners who buy and sell British property "pay their fair share".

However, it is understood that Mr Clegg's plan would also apply to British people living abroad and who are classed as non-residents here, but still own property in the UK.

Approximately five million Britons live abroad. It is not known how many of these still own a property in the UK and are non-resident.

Extract from the Telegraph online; full article is here -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatnews/10458673/Thousands-of-Britons-caught-up-in-tax-raid-on-wealthy-foreigners.html>

What do you call a New Zealander with a sheep under each arm? A bigamist.

INHERITANCE TAX & YOU. WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW. Part 3.

You will no doubt be now aware that the Spanish inheritance tax law discriminates against non-resident property owners. But in mid-October, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) found for a Swiss national and tax resident in Switzerland against the German tax authorities. German tax rules on inheritance are similar to the Spanish law in that residents are treated more favourably than non-residents.

The CJEU found that the differing taxation rates for residents and non-residents was clearly discriminatory and against several articles in the EU Treaty, such as the free movement of capital etc. Now many are waiting for this same tribunal to adjudicate on a court case started by the European Commission against the Spanish inheritance and gift tax rules.

If you have in the past paid more tax than a resident in relation to the gift or succession tax, a competent experienced lawyer can now assist you in claiming it back. (The above info' came from a legal article by Carlos Baos of www.white-baos.com)

Unfortunately there is insufficient space this month to cover the extra inheritance and gift tax allowances that residents can claim. But I promise more in future issues.

A Room with a View.

It was one o'clock in the morning and the manager of the hotel had just been woken up by a frantic phone call from a little old lady. 'Come quickly! Oh, please come quickly!' she wailed. 'I can see a naked man from my window.' The manager hastily dressed and rushed up to the little old lady's room. He found her pointing at a block of flats opposite her hotel bedroom - but all the manager could see was the naked top half of a young man.

'But my dear woman,' soothed the manager, 'the young man opposite is surely only preparing for bed. And how can you possibly be offended by him? The man may not be completely naked.'

'The wardrobe!' shrieked the old lady. 'Stand on the wardrobe!'

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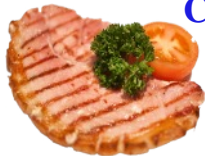
I went to a massage parlour once. It was self service. Rodney Dangerfield

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CUT-OUT AND PRESENT WITH ORDER.**



It seems that this year's French Tennis Open has been cancelled due to a national crisis;
they have plenty of racquets, but no balls.

Would you believe it?

Research by a Spanish University has found that British men do over 50% more housework around the house as Spanish men.

Marta Dominguez Folgueras, of Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, studied the living and working habits of more 58,000 men across a number of European countries, and found that UK do around 33% of all household chores, whereas in Spain, men only managed 20%.

The Spanish team studied the amount of time men spent cooking, ironing, cleaning the house, washing dishes, doing the laundry and odd jobs, gardening and shopping for groceries. Presenting the study, Folgueras concluded "If all housework is considered, the UK would rate as the most egalitarian country, followed by France, Germany, and as more in-egalitarian cases, Italy and Spain" "The difference is significant: British Men do on average one third of the housework whereas in Spain, they hardly manage 20%".

Those taking part in the study were required to keep a diary of their activities throughout the day. The majority of housework was done by women - except in shopping, where the chores were generally split 50/50. (And therein lies the weakness. Can you actually trust the blokes to keep an accurate record or will they be 'padded-out' like their expenses usually are? Editor) (Tumbit)

Brave is the man who brushes the lavatory clean, but braver still the man who cleans the lavatory brush.
Miles Kingston

-Mummy, where does dust come from?

-Cremated fairies.

5-year-old & Jil Evans



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THE GOOD NEWS!

What with the crisis, companies failing, up to our necks in corrupt politicians and the colder weather, is there any good news to cheer-up the Spanish? Thankfully, yes. The OECD, The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, has reported that the life expectancy of the Spanish is 82.4 years, only below Italy with 82.7 and Switzerland at 82.8. Spain has seen a ten-year increase in life expectancy since 1970 when it was just 72.4 years. Spanish women on average live six years longer than men. Lower fertility levels combined with a longer life will see that by 2050 36% of the population will be over 65 years old and 15% will be over 80.

Despite the increased life expectancy, the OECD report, 'Health at a Glance,' the report also stated that Spain was at the top for the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, cocaine and cannabis in the EU.

Spain is situated among the top five countries in the world for the amount of cigarettes smoked in a year, with 118 packets per person a year, which is equivalent to 6.46 cigarettes a day. The other four tobacco loving countries are Greece, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Japan.

The United Kingdom leads cocaine use amongst the young at 4.2%, followed by Spain at 3.6% and Ireland at 2.8%. The countries which take the least cocaine are Romania and Greece. (I often wonder how they measure this activity.)

The OECD report concludes that in general the health of the Spanish citizens is good, measured by life expectancy and child mortality which show Spain to be above 34 countries in the OECD.

So hopefully this longevity will 'rub off' on some of us expat's without having to dip into the dodgy substances.

<http://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/Health-at-a-Glance-2013.pdf> for more information.



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Sticking with it!

Rose is discussing her daughter's failing marriage with her friend Paula. 'She's so unhappy,' says Rose. 'The stress is affecting her appetite. She lost two stones in two months.' 'That's terrible,' says Paula, 'but if she's that unhappy, why doesn't she just leave him?'

Rose replies, 'She wants to lose two and a half.'

Looking for Howard.

A Norfolk farmer in his pickup drove to a neighbour's and knocked at the door. A boy, about 9, opened the door.

"Is your Dad home?" "No he isn't; he went to town."

"Well, is your Mother here?" "No she went to town with Dad."

"How about your brother Howard? Is he here?" "No he went with Mum and Dad."

The farmer stood there for a few minutes, shifting from one foot to the other, and mumbling to himself.

"Is there anything I can do for you? I know where all the tools are, if you want to borrow one, or I can give dad a message."

"Well," said the farmer uncomfortably, "I really wanted to talk to your Dad. It's about your brother Howard getting my daughter Suzie pregnant."

The boy thought for a moment. "You would have to talk to Dad about that. I know he charges £500 for the bull and £50 for the dog, but I don't know how much he charges for Howard."





BAR DOMINO


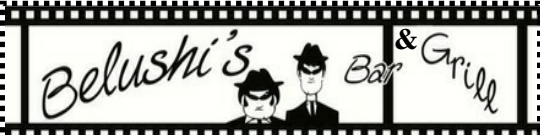
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J.J. And Rob of Belushi's would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy & Prosperous New Year.

For Don & Marlene.

Just think, if the North American Indians had given the Pilgrims a donkey instead of a turkey, you'd all be having a piece of ass this Thanksgiving.

Happy Thanksgiving, Christmas & New Year to our readers in the U.S.

Two Beggars in London.

Ali and Habib are beggars. They beg in different areas of London. Habib begs just as long as Ali does, but only collects £2 to £3 every day. Ali brings home a suitcase FULL of £10 notes, drives a Mercedes, lives in a mortgage-free house and has a lot of money to spend. Habib says to Ali 'I work just as long and hard as you do but how is it that you bring home a suitcase full of £10 notes every day?' Ali says, 'Look at your sign, what does it say?' Habib's sign reads 'I have no work, a wife and 6 kids to support'. Ali says 'No wonder you only get £2- £3'. Habib says... 'So what does your sign say?' Ali shows Habib his sign... It reads, 'I only need another £10 to move back to Pakistan'.

Brian H.

GIVING CREDIT WHERE IT IS DUE.....

Jane and Neil's Karaoke Disco - a review.

Karaoke will always elicit a range of conflicting responses. Some hate it as they feel that it interrupts the natural order and tranquility of their drinking establishments whilst others see it as a way of turning an otherwise mediocre evening into an enjoyable party night. Certainly, few are ambivalent to it.

One of the problems with karaoke on the Costa Blanca, and indeed anywhere else, is the quality of the presentation by the various operators. I have found that these differ greatly. Most have poor quality equipment, software and speakers, cheap and inadequate backing tracks, bad presentation skills and dreadful voices. Bad karaoke can empty a bar but good karaoke can often fill it.



So I was particularly pleased to come across one of the finest karaoke teams locally with Jane and Neil's Karaoke Disco. Here you have a couple who have injected professionalism and quality into the karaoke experience. Not only do they have state-of-the-art audio/visual equipment, but their library of quality songs and backing tracks is massive, not only in English but in German, Spanish and other languages as well. I was amazed to see them load what seemed like a Scandinavian - possibly Norwegian song - for a customer once in The Courtyard. (So sad though...music to cut your wrists by!) One of the great things about Jane & Neil is that they can read a crowd. They can seamlessly change from karaoke to disco and back, ensuring that it becomes an enjoyable party night. Another bonus is that they both have excellent voices. If there is ever a lull, they will jump in with a duo or a solo performance which is always top notch. Their performance of some of the classics is impressive, 'Baby it's cold outside!' being one of my favourites. Also, if you are floundering with one of your songs they will assist and support you - nobody is let out to dry! The couple also carry a range of videos of classic pop songs, many from the 60's and right up to date.

This talented and friendly couple perform at The Courtyard Bar in the Filton Centre on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and at The Phoenix Bar in Via Park V on Sunday evenings. Do come along to one of the evenings. Singing is good for the soul and if you don't want to be 'in the spotlight' you can always join in from the 'sidelines.'

If your bar could do with a little extra pizzazz or if you have a private party coming up, Jane & Neil can 'deliver the goods' and help ensure an enjoyable evening.

Jane & Neil can be contacted on 674 800 868 & neil_friston64@yahoo.co.uk

The Cure.

A foreman hires an Italian man to do a job, but he rings up and complains he's feeling too unwell to work. 'Tell you what,' says the foreman, 'When I'm feeling ill I have sex with my wife. It soon perks me up. Give it a go and let's see how you feel.' A few hours later the Italian rings back and says, 'I had sex just-a like-a you said. You have very nice a-house.'



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***It is currently estimated that more than one million pensions worth £3bn have been abandoned in dormant accounts. Many of these funds suffer high charges and poor annuity rates, with their owners ignorant that returns could be increased significantly by consolidating their money and taking an active interest.**

(The Telegraph, July 12, 2013)



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Happy
New Year!*

It's all in the mind!

- A journalist visits a recently-opened psychiatric hospital to interview the chief psychiatrist for his newspaper. 'So how do you decide whether a patient should be institutionalised?' asks the journalist. 'Well,' replies the psychiatrist, 'usually we fill a bath with water; then we offer the patient a teaspoon, a teacup and a bucket, and ask them to empty the bath.' 'I see,' says the journalist. 'So a sane person would choose the bucket, because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup.' 'Not really,' says the psychiatrist. 'A sane person would just pull the plug. So, would you like a room with an east view or a west view?'
- Bernard went to a psychiatrist a couple of weeks ago. He felt people were taking advantage of him. He finished redecorating the consulting rooms this morning.

FROST-FREE FRIDGES & FREEZERS.

Like many people I'm the proud owner of a "frost-free" or self defrosting refrigerator which I was starting to think was about worn out until a chance conversation with an old mate.....

The gent in question is a mobile service technician and has been for many years driving a white van emblazoned with the logos of such household names as Bosch, AEG, Siemens, Miele etc around Hertfordshire fixing appliances in people's homes, on mentioning my ailing appliance he advised me to defrost it and after doing so I'm delighted to report it is back to good as new, this is how he explained it.....

Typically once a day the freezer goes into its defrost cycle where a heater comes on in the cooling coils to melt the ice that builds up there, often the cycle is too short to de-ice the coils and as it re freezes it forms an even more solid, as in proper ice rather than layers of frost, a layer which effectively insulates the cooling coils preventing the unit from cooling efficiently. It seems there is also a drain pipe running down to the compressor unit, the round, usually black thing at the back of the appliance which evaporates the melted ice back into the air and this pipe can sometimes hold water which re freezes when the cooling cycle starts again, the insulation on modern appliances can be so efficient that the ice never melts and builds up causing more problems.

So this was the advice offered....

Never leave a fridge or freezer door open, it lets warm air in and moisture condenses out of it which freezes on the inside of the cooling unit coating it with ice.

Defrost the appliance 3 or 4 times a year, emptying the contents into cold boxes or a neighbours freezer.

Speed the defrosting by gently warming the coils with a hair dryer but keep the hair dryer moving and never leave it warming the same spot for more than a few seconds.

Make sure the interior is thoroughly dried and put the appliance on its highest setting for a couple of hours to chill down before putting the contents back in.

Make sure the door seals are in good condition. Keeping the freezer clean and defrosted will increase its life and dramatically reduce running costs.

I did ask him about people here with holiday homes, leave the freezer on or off?

"Off" said he, even a modern unit with use €1 or more a week in electricity, worst case could be treble that, not worth leaving on for half a bag of frozen peas is it! And apparently the compressor units do not deteriorate when left idle, although if you leave your freezer lying on its side, and I suppose some might, it should be stood in its normal upright position for 24 hours before switching on.

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See advert opposite.



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Bad Cooking.

My wife's a terrible cook. Last night she cooked me a casserole. After I'd forced it down, she asked me what I wanted for dessert. I said, 'The antidote!'

She woke me up the other night and told me that there was a burglar in the kitchen and that he was eating some of her left-know who to call first: ambulance. Her cooking is so bad, the last time she made a cottage pie, it was condemned. She once asked me if I would like some frozen pizza for dinner. I replied, 'No. I would prefer if it was warmed up a bit.'



other night and told me that there was a burglar in the kitchen eating some of her left-know who to call first: ambulance.

bad, the last time she made a cottage pie, it was condemned.

They say that most accidents happen in the kitchen; unfortunately I usually end up eating them.

For a long time she thought 'coq au vin' meant love in a lorry. I'm not saying that she is a bad cook, but she uses the smoke alarm as a timer.

If you leave dental floss in the kitchen, the cockroaches hang themselves.

THE NATURAL GAS OPTION.

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Times are bad. Children no longer obey their parents and everyone is writing a book. Cicero, circa 43 BC.

The wicked but cute witch!



Unfortunately I lost most of my Halloween photos due to a dumb mistake. Will do better next year.



Qué Horrible!



MINI-VAMPIRE!



No blood!! Best have a beer instead!



A lady was stopped at Barajas Airport on her way to a wedding with this handbag which incorporates a 'knuckle-duster.' These were on sale in various shops in Valencia but are now banned.

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Number 12!

Mr and Mrs O'Reilly had been trying for a son for many years and, after eleven daughters they were eventually rewarded with a son. 'Who does he look like?' asked a friend visiting Mrs O'Reilly at the maternity hospital. 'We don't know,' replied Mrs O'Reilly. 'We haven't looked at his face yet.'

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Idiots of the Month.

Once again the manufacturers of the Spanish submarine feature in the column. The Spanish Industry Ministry will give Navantia - the state-owned shipbuilding company, an advance of 774 million in 2014 to redesign the S-80 submarine. What was to have been the new generation of Spanish submarines when the first one was completed it was found to be too heavy, and although it could float it would be unable to re-surface from the sea bed. The cost of the project is now up to €2.135 billion. Maybe it is the taxpayer who puts up with this nonsense is the real idiot.

The national police in the northern town of Santiago de Compostela arrested a 70-year-old man for trying to hire a 'hit' on a judge. The story starts in August this year when the man visited his partner and tried to kill her. Fortunately the sawn-off shotgun he had failed to fire and the man was arrested.



Somewhat unwisely, the judge freed the man, but banned him from going near his unfortunate partner. The man later said that the judge had ruined his life so he placed several adverts in the regional press seeking the service of an individual who could perform 'a special job' for the price of €5,000. The job was to kill the judge and he received about 600 phone calls from the adverts. Naturally the police 'got wind' of this and re-arrested the septuagenarian. But once again the court has let him off with charges pending. My own feeling is letting this guy out is just asking for trouble. Based on his history it might be more prudent to lock him up or at least tie him to a chair!

But my favourite this month is the 'ambitious' guy who called at a brothel near the city of Malaga and hired three prostitutes. Now this immediately reminded me of the oft quoted Red Indian saying - 'Paleface always bites off more than he can chew.' Anyway, when the foursome had completed their business, the ladies demanded €70 each - not an outlandish sum according to a friend of mine who knows about these things but must remain anonymous. The chap however would only pay two of the ladies and not the third for some unspecified reason. This led to a very heated argument.

But eventually two of the ladies placated the *Casanova* by soothing and caressing him. Then to everyone's surprise, the third lady pulled out a knife (God knows from where) and stabbed the man in his now somewhat deflated 'pride & joy.' The injured man wrapped his damaged member in bandages (maybe one of the girls had a nurse's uniform!) and went by taxi to the nearest health centre. There they said the wound was too serious for them to deal with and sent the man to a hospital in Marbella. There followed a blood transfusion and a two-hour operation. Afterwards the man stated that the doctors said he was very close to dying or impotent for the rest of his life. He added, 'I will never go back to a place like that again.' I can only assume he meant the brothel not the hospital.

Hard Times!

A surgeon is operating on a man when he slips up and accidentally cuts off the man's testicles. To hide his mistake, the surgeon slips a couple of small onions into the man's scrotum and sews it up. A month later the man comes back for a check-up. 'So, have you noticed any differences since your operation?' asks the surgeon nervously.

'A couple,' replies the man. 'I cry when I pee and I get a hard-on every time I go near a hot-dog stand.'

'It's been a rough day. I put on a shirt and a button fell off. I picked up my briefcase and the handle came off. I'm afraid to go to the bathroom.'

Rodney Dangerfield

Man cannot live on bread alone - he needs a bit of crumpet too.

My Job: As a funeral director, I take every chance I get to tie the shoe laces together of the deceased. Because if there was ever a zombie apocalypse, it would be f**king hilarious!

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The Call of the Wild.

Two hunters hire a moose costume in the hope they can get close enough to a bull moose to kill it. They creep up on a huge bull moose but find that the costume's zip is stuck. Suddenly there's a loud bellow and the hunter in the front of the costume sees that the bull moose is approaching them with a huge erection. 'What are we going to do now?' anxiously asks the hunter in the back of the costume. 'I'm going to nibble some grass,' replies the other. 'You'd better brace yourself.'

The Altomar alternative for Christmas Day.

If you want to escape the Christmas Day traditional lunch scene, might I suggest that you pay a visit to the Altomar Bar, Restaurant & Pizzeria; it's past Consum towards the bottom of Los Altos on the left hand side. Although this excellent restaurant will be closed on Christmas Eve evening, it will be open on Christmas Day, offering the full menu including their excellent three-course Menu del Dia, for less than eight euros. The full a-la-carte menu includes steaks, chicken, fish & pizzas of course - everything cooked freshly to order. During this cold spell, their homemade soups are especially welcome. Their specially priced Menu del Dia is now also available in the evenings and it is worth a try anytime. Great value!

HOW THE EU AND THE SPANISH LEGAL SYSTEM HAVE FAILED THE VICTIMS.

Spanish police are keeping a sadistic killer known as the "tracksuit madman" under close watch after his release from prison under a European human rights ruling, officials reported last weekend. Manuel Gonzalez Gonzalez was released on Nov' 15 from a penitentiary just west of Barcelona where he had been serving a 169-year sentence delivered in 1997 for horrific sexual assaults on 16 women and the resulting death of one of the victims.

"According to the experts, he is not cured of his urges," a regional interior ministry official, Ramon Espadaler, told Catalunya Radio. Consequently, police have been ordered to keep Gonzalez under watch, Espadaler said. However, he noted, Gonzalez "is a citizen and he is freed... he does not have a police officer by his side". Spanish media quoted a prison medical evaluation saying Gonzalez presented a "high risk" of re-offending, and "other acts of violence" cannot be excluded. Several of Gonzalez's traumatised victims were collectively informed by officials one day before his release.

Gonzalez was jailed for a 1991-1993 string of violent attacks on randomly chosen girls and women walking in Barcelona's streets in which he approached them from behind and stabbed their genitalia. His release complied with an October 21 European Court of Human Rights ruling that found Spain had acted illegally by *denying certain prisoners shortened sentences for good behaviour. That ruling, which has created fury in Spain, has already led to the release of dozens of dangerous convicts - including rapists and members of the Basque armed separatist group ETA. (AFP)

(*This was called the Parot doctrine, see issue No. 81.)

The Visit to the Vatican.

Chap goes to the barber for a haircut, but this particular barber happens to be a miserable git. Eventually the barber says "Well, I'd better do the normal barber chit-chat I suppose... you going away on holiday this year?"

Blake says "Yes, me and my wife are going to Rome"

Barber says "Bloody hell, me and my Mrs went there a couple of years back, it was shite. Who you flying over there with then?"

"Erm... we're flying Al Italia actually"

Barber says "Oh Christ, they're shite as well! So, when you're in Rome, you got anything planned?"

Blake a little bit taken aback and says "Well, we're going to go to the Vatican, me and my wife are devout Catholics"

Barber says "I knew it - the Vatican, so predictable! Me and my Mrs went there too - it was shite!"

2 months later, the bloke goes back to the same barber, sits down in the chair.

Barber looks at him and says "You're that bloke who went to Rome aren't you? Shite isn't it?"

Blake says "Actually, it was fantastic, the weather, the food, the people - all great actually"

Barber says "You've got to admit, that Al Italia are shite aren't they?"

"Actually no, we got an upgrade to Business Class - it was wonderful"

Barber says "How was the Vatican then?"

"It was perfect, and actually the Swiss Guard came and picked me, my wife and 10 other people out of the massive crowd for a private audience with the Pope"

Barber is interested now "Oh, what happened then...?"

"Well, we were taken into the Popes private study, we were all kneeling down and the Pope came and laid his hands on our head, and blessed and spoke to us."

Barber says "What did the Pope say to you then?"

"Who the f**k cut your hair? It's shite!".

GOSSIP!

I love a bit of gossip, particularly if it helps us laugh at the rich, famous and pompous. The Spanish media thrives on it, particularly the tabloids and TV. Here it is called the *Prensa Rosa* - the Pink Press. If you watch Spanish TV, particularly in the mornings or at lunchtime, you will be swamped with programs where a panel will discuss the *shenanigans* of various and usually Grade Z celebrities. Most of these celeb's are unknown to us *Anglosajons*, but you might find the following from the Alicante newspaper, *Informacion*, a bit more entertaining as it mentions people better known to us.



- It seems that David and Victoria Beckham hired a butler/professional at the cost of \$1,600 a day just to open their Christmas presents. Victoria didn't want to damage her nails!

- It is surprising that singers, who depend on the public for their 'crust', are just not happy with having them around. Madonna had the Prado art museum closed during her visit in 1998 so that she that she could view the paintings and exhibits on her own, together with a guide. Then singer/actress Jennifer Lopez had a whole shopping mall closed for her during a visit to Columbia. On a visit with her then husband, Marc Anthony, to the Canaries', she had her total suite redecorated in white, a gym placed in an adjoining suite and brought her own sheets as she doesn't like to sleep where others have slept.

- Elton John has been know to spend €60,000 a day to decorate his hotel room with flowers. He has also often requested skimmed donkey-milk.

- Paris Hilton paid a reportedly exorbitant price to have per dead goat buried in a plot close to Marilyn Munroe's.

- Kim Kardashian had the entire floor of a maternity ward closed so that she could give birth to her own son and enjoy the first moments uninterrupted. Yep, childbirth is a hoot!

- When in a hotel, Mariah Carey requested Dead Sea Salts for exfoliation and French mineral water to bathe herself and her dog.

In the last history article No. 35 issue No. 80, we saw how the deteriorating economic situation contributed to the departure of Primo de Rivera and his mild dictatorship. But the depression in Spain was less severe than the rest of Europe, largely because the country was still industrially underdeveloped. Primo resigned because the army would not support him. He wanted to modernise the artillery and engineer corps in Spain by introducing promotion by merit. The army in Spain (unlike those who served or were serving in North Africa - the *africanistas*) was a leaden-footed bureaucracy with one officer for every six soldiers. Promotion in Spain was strictly by seniority unlike in the *africanistas*, where it was by merit. Primo's modernisation plans for the army, particularly the artillery and engineer corps in Spain, was seen by the Captains General as a measure which would 'upset the harmony of the military family.' Consequently, they turned their back on him, an action they would come to regret in just a little over a year.

King Alfonso then appointed a succession of weak governments, the first headed by General Dámaso Berenguer and the second by Admiral Juan Bautista Aznar. Their's was a period of ineffective government against a background of student protests, a succession of strikes with Catalonia demanding greater independence. The anarchist CNT also began to organise as did the republicans.

On August 17, 1930, a group of nine different republican parties held a meeting in San Sebastián together with some socialist party leaders. This became known as the Pact of San Sebastián. A revolutionary committee was formed at the meeting headed by a liberal republican, Alcalá-Zamora. This committee had close contacts with a military group in a garrison town in Aragon, with the intent of bringing about a military coup in favour of a republic. The coup was scheduled for December 15, 1930, but one of the military conspirators, a hot-head called Captain Fermín Galán, 'jumped the gun' and attempted to start the coup three days earlier on December 12. With inept leadership and without food or transport, the rebels were quickly defeated by loyal troops. The Revolutionary Committee were thrown in jail and Captain Fermín Galán and an officer colleague, Hernández, were executed by firing squad. This gave the republicans their first martyrs and Republican portraits of the two were to be later found pinned on working-class walls. An attempt by Berenguer to offer an election was rejected by the various parties, including the jailed Revolutionary Committee, because they believed it would be rigged in the old government appointed municipalities. Berenguer resigned to be replaced by Admiral Aznar.

Aznar called for municipal elections on April 12, 1931. Although the monarchists secured a majority in the election especially in the rural areas, 46 of 50 provincial capitals went Republican. So although there was a majority of monarchist municipal councillors elected in Spain as a whole, Republicans would argue that the 'enlightened' urban voter and the larger constituencies of the cities confirmed their victory, the rural municipalities being 'corrupt' and manipulated.

By the evening of April 14, King Alfonso XIII decided to leave Spain. Because he had supported the Primo dictatorship, which was unconstitutional, Spain no longer had any confidence in its king. It was said that the normally conservative Madrid police also voted Republican, as worn out by student riots and strikes, they just wanted to get a good night's sleep. The army stood down in what has been referred to since as a negative *pronunciamiento*. They were just not prepared to support the monarchy at this stage. Rather than face civil war and the growing demonstrations in Madrid, Alfonso rushed to the port of Cartagena and boarded a ship bound for France. Alfonso commented, 'Sunday's elections have shown me that I no longer enjoy the love of my people. We are out of fashion.' After 231 years, the great Bourbon dynasty collapsed with a whimper.

The Revolutionary Committee were ferried by taxis from the model prison and together with other leaders of several small parties took over the government of Spain on April 14, 1931. This was a largely self-appointed group who would at least, for the moment, enjoy the acquiescence of the majority of the politically conscious. A republic was declared, which was referred to as *la niña bonita* - the pretty girl. The Catalans 'jumped the gun' by declaring Cataluña to be a separate and autonomous state. Three ministers were rushed from Madrid to the Catalan capital and made them withdraw their declaration of independence and stick to the terms agreed with the Revolutionary Committee in August 1930 - that is, to draft a statute of autonomy for submission to the Catalan electorate and ratification by the national parliament in due course.

While researching this crucial part of Spanish history, what surprised me most were the differing accounts of the next five years prior to the devastating civil war of 1936-39. The Republicans and the Left may have lost the civil war, but they certainly won the propaganda battle up to, during and after it. A simplified image was projected abroad of an enlightened liberal democracy with a social democratic slant combating reactionary opposition and fascist tyranny. Many historians have turned the period into a hagiography of the Republican Left believing it brought five years of uninterrupted progress toward a democratic Spain which was eventually smashed by a military uprising in 1936. But we will see that *la niña bonita* was a period of intolerant, autocratic and highly disorganised rule.

The Second Republic can be divided into three periods - First there were two years of radical social change under the left-centre; secondly, another two years controlled by the centre-right, when most of the previous changes and legislation were overturned; and finally, about six months of chaotic Popular Front rule before the civil war. Each of these three periods had to contend with a serious armed rebellion of some sort, which just added to the chaos.

In just over five years there were eighteen governments with the President of the Republic manipulating a series of political crises just as Alfonso did. But in May, just one month after the declaration, the honeymoon period of the Republic ended with a savage burst of anti-clericalism throughout the country. Mobs led by anarchists and some Radical Socialists sacked monarchist buildings in Madrid and then proceeded to set fire to and wreck more than a dozen churches in the capital. Similar arson and vandalism occurred throughout Spain with monasteries, convents and churches being destroyed, in many cases with the acquiescence and assistance of the official Republican authorities. The burning of convents - *quema de conventos* - set the tone for relations between the anti-clerical Republican Left and the Spanish Catholics and would soon, because of Republican legislation, develop into a contributory cause of the Spanish Civil War. The attitude of many Republicans to the clergy is best illustrated by a mayor of one town who cabled that government asking, 'We have declared for the Republic. What shall we do with the priest?' The anarchist CNT, constantly violent towards the clergy, had now built us a membership of one million members, but with just one paid secretary!

On June 28, 1931, with the monarchists and the Right in total disarray, a Republican-Socialist coalition swept to victory in the first general election. Change would be quick and dramatic with the army and Catholics being the first targets of the Left & Republicans.

(More next month.)

A fool and his money are soon elected.
Will Rogers

Lime Bar Fishing Sunbathing Club.

The 'Sunbathers' second round winter match was scheduled for Thursday 14th November.

The inclement early morning obviously deterred some of the less avid anglers, with 9 standing alongside the Eden, with 5 members AWOL.

Ten minutes before 'baits-in' the heavens opened! Oh Happy Day! Fortunately this only lasted for 10 minutes.

At 10.00a.m. the match was terminated; 'The Bamboo Cutter' arrived and we were told to leave a.s.a.p. (in Spanish).

This was obviously a relief for several members in the more fancied pegs, as nothing of note had been brought to the net; whereas those in the un-fancied ones had success, albeit very small, other than Davey, (and commiserations to him) who already had two fish in the net, with one over 4lbs.

The match was re-arranged for Monday 25th November at 'Nancy's'; the draw for pegs to remain the same.

With improving weather and plenty of bait most members de-camped to Nancy's where Paul showed everyone how, with over 20lbs of fish. Some of us did not do quite as well.

Keith Todd.

The Bash

Anti social Baz, you are reprieved!

Baz's Bash @ Bocados was brilliant. A big thank you to Mike, Dave, Joeni & Judith for making it a really special night. Unfortunately, one pair of 'muppets' thought the 'do' was on Saturday. Never mind Keith, you missed a great night but John & Sue didn't waste your wine.

The wine flowed & the food was good. The "Rockits", a 4 piece rock & roll band entertained us and had us dancing all night. I nearly had a hernia when they played Status Quo!

One of our guests, Mal, has a bad hip but it didn't stop him from throwing a mean leg with the ladies, especially with the lovely Joeni (one of our waitresses). Even Pete had a dance!

Geoff "the snapper" forgot his camera so I lent him mine. Cheeky sod said it was an antique!

Anyway, he took loads of photos, so let me know if you want a copy.

Fishy fingers!

The Ghost.

A man walks into a fishmonger's carrying a salmon under his arm. 'Do you make fishcakes?' he asks. 'Of course,' says the fishmonger. 'Oh good,' says the man. 'It's his birthday.'

The Future of Football.

The Arsenal, Chelsea and England football team managers leave a Football awards' ceremony in Blackpool together and decide to have a stroll along the sea front. They spot a booth where a clairvoyant is claiming to be the voice of God himself (or possibly herself) and they decide to go in for a giggle.

The Arsenal manager, Wenger, asks God, 'When will Arsenal win the European Cup?' God booms out, 'In the year 2033.' Wenger moans, 'That's no good for me, I won't be around by then.'

The Chelsea manager, Mourinho - who always thought he was God - asks, 'When will Chelsea win the European Cup?' God booms out, 'In the year 2076.' Mourinho moans, 'That's no good for me, I won't be around by then.'

The England manager, Hodgson, gets down on his knees and asks God, 'When will England next win the World Cup?'

God booms out, 'F**k knows, I won't be around by then!'

The police station toilet seat in Torrevieja was stolen last week. The cops have nothing to go on.



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THE NEW CITIZEN SECURITY LAW.

Since the PP gained an absolute majority during the last general election in Spain, they have been able to pass a raft of new laws quite easily. These have ranged from new Education Acts to Traffic Acts. The latest, which is still in its draft stage is the Citizen Security Law.

The proposed new law is seen by many as draconian and authoritarian and stifles peoples right to demonstrate against injustices. The draft will have to go through some hoops yet before it becomes law.

Some of the changes proposed are as follows -

Parents will be expected to pay for damage done in the public domain by their children.

There are **serious violations** which will attract fines of between €1,001 and €30,000. These include wearing a hood, mask, scarf or other item which prohibits identification during a public order incident; threatening, coercing, or insulting any agent of the police/security forces during demonstrations or any other type of protest; offering or negotiating the service of a prostitute near schools or children's areas; damage to rubbish bins, containers etc; blocking the right of way with tyres or other objects.

Then there are the **very serious violations** which will attract fines of between €30,001 and €600,000! These include shining laser lights on drivers & pilots; the recording and broadcast of photos, images and film of police/security forces which could put their safety in danger; serious disturbances of order in public, religious, and sporting events; protestors who surround and impede the Congress building can be fined the maximum; non communicated protests or demonstrations at power stations and airport runways.

Although there were 1,800 attacks on police so far this year, a unified police union think the new fine of €600,000 is 'absurd and disproportionate.'

A last kiss?

A tough group of bikers were riding along when they saw a girl about to jump off a bridge, so they stopped.

The leader, a big burly man, gets off his bike and asks her, 'What are you doing?'

'I'm going to commit suicide' she says.

While he didn't want to appear insensitive, he didn't want to miss an opportunity so he said, 'Well, before you jump, why don't you give me a kiss?'

So she does and it was a long, deep, lingering and sensual kiss. After she's finished the biker says, 'Wow! That was amazing, the best kiss I have ever had. That's a real talent you are wasting. You could be famous..... But why are you committing suicide?'

She said, 'My parents don't like me dressing-up as a girl.'

OTHER LATE SPANISH NEWS.

Catalonia will soon become the first Spanish region to ban circus acts with live animals. 99 municipalities in the region already have a similar ban in place. Across Spain this figure rises to 133.

Despite swinging cuts and massive debt, the Catalan President, Artur Mas, has taken an entourage of more than 60 people on his trip to Israel. Several wives, businessmen, scientists, journalists and personal assistants, all of them staying in a luxury hotel. Mas, you will recall, is one of the most audible proponents of Catalan sovereignty and the trip was supposed to promote this.

An agreement has been made between the unions and management to put an end to thirteen days of strike action by street cleaners and gardeners in Madrid. Under the agreement there will be no redundancies, but instead incentives for retirement, such as 45 days wages for every year worked on the job until 2017. The road cleaning companies in Madrid will have to pay €800,000 for damages and to cover the extra wages of the police during the 13 day strike.

If you want to hire a mobility scooter in Benidorm now, you have to be at least 55-years old or have a disability. There were too many younger 'piss-heads' hiring them in the summer instead of taxis. There are now also fines of up to €90 for a range of 23 offences regarding these vehicles. These include driving while drunk, drugged or reckless driving. Liability insurance for a minimum of €60,000 is now also required in Benidorm.

As the Bárcenas PP funding investigation continues, a PP manager from Castilla-la Mancha, José Ángel Cañas, said that he signed a receipt for €200,000 for Bárcenas but said he received no money. He said he signed it because he was 'afraid' of the ex-PP treasurer, Bárcenas. The President of the giant construction group Sacyr, told the judge that he never gave any money to the PP, but he admitted having a number of meetings with Luis Bárcenas, something he denied three months ago. Would you believe either of them?

Another one bites the dust!

Carlos Fabra, the former chief of Castellón province who became famous for authorising the building of Castellón airport featuring a large statue in his honour, has been sentenced to four years in prison for tax fraud. He did not declare income of almost two million euros to the tax office for the years between 1999 and 2004. Fabra will have to pay a fine of €693,000 together with the same amount in tax to the revenue authorities. His ex-wife was also sentenced to two years in jail (which she probably won't serve) and a fine of €274,000 plus a duplicate amount in back tax.

Despite the four-year sentence, the former head of the Castellón PP said he was very happy with the ruling because it did not find him guilty of bribery or influence peddling. In his view, this implied his actions had not involved any "corruption."

A bit of TLC.

Eileen and her husband Bob went for counselling after 25 years of marriage. When asked what the problem was, Eileen went into a passionate, painful tirade listing every problem they had ever had in the 25 years they had been married. She went on and on and on: neglect, lack of intimacy, emptiness, loneliness, feeling unloved and unlovable, an entire laundry list of unmet needs she had endured over the course of their marriage.

Finally, after allowing this to go on for a sufficient length of time, the therapist got up, walked around the desk and after asking Eileen to stand, embraced her, unbuttoned her blouse and bra, put his hands on her breasts and massaged them thoroughly, while kissing her passionately as her husband Bob watched with a raised eyebrow!

Eileen shut up, buttoned up her blouse, and quietly sat down while basking in the glow of being highly aroused.

The therapist turned to Bob and said, 'This is what your wife needs at least three times a week..... Can you do this?'

Bob thought for a moment and replied, 'Well, I can drop her off here on Mondays and Wednesdays ...but on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays I play *petanca*.....'

WANNA' BUY A BOAT?

The sale of Spanish Royal Yacht Fortuna has so far run up a bill of more than €1 Million as the troubled monarchy struggles to offload the luxury vessel, see photo.

The Fortuna was mainly used to entertain visiting dignitaries, including Princess Diana and Prince Charles in 1990, as well as for family photo shoots with the Royal Family.

However, a corruption scandal encircling the royal house, deep public austerity and



objections by Spanish subjects over the opulence the monarchy enjoys at the expense of struggling tax payers all led to the Spanish King's decision to offload the vessel in what many believed to be a PR stunt to win favour with the public.

As use of Fortuna was discontinued, staff aboard the boat which were laid off subsequently embarked upon legal proceedings over their dismissal. The Captain and crew all filed complaints for illegal dismissal which a court agreed with and awarded compensation of €133,789 to the Captain and €100,000 to each of the seven crew members. It is unclear whether their legal expenses are included in the compensation or additional. The compensation will be taken from the Spanish equivalent of the civil list, the Patrimonio Nacional, which draws from taxpayer's funds.

The €21 million super yacht Fortuna was a gift to the Spanish king from a group of wealthy business men from the Balearic Islands, who through its sale, hope to recoup some of their costs. (Tumbit.com)

Valencia's Regional TV & Radio Station Closed Down.

The regional premier for Valencia, Alberto Fabra, has decided to close the station, RTVV, set up in 1989, after a court overruled his plan to sack 1,000 of the 1,700 workforce. Total losses for the channel this year came to €207.8 million, the channels annual income being insufficient to pay even two months wages. Fabra took the draconian step because he said that he 'didn't want to close a school or hospital to keep the TV station, Canal 9, open.'

The channel has an accumulated debt of over €1.2 billion, was overstaffed by about 35%, a propaganda tool for the PP - the Canal 9 manager racking up €72,945 in expenses this year alone.

Other regional TV stations are experiencing similar problems but maybe not to such a horrific financial level. In the end it is the poor taxpayer who pays for this regional lunacy.

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LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE LADIES!

What do you call a woman who does the same amount of work as a bloke?

A lazy cow.

What do you call a woman who knows where her husband is every night?

A widow.

What do you call a musician without a girlfriend?

Homeless.

What do you call the useless flap of skin on the end of a penis?

A bloke!

What do you call 200 blokes at the bottom of the sea?

A good start.

What is the difference between your husband and your lover?

About four hours.

What are a woman's four favourite animals?

A mink in the wardrobe, a jaguar in the garage, a tiger in the bedroom and an ass who'll pay for it all.

An intelligent woman, an intelligent bloke and the tooth fairy were walking down the road one day when they looked down and noticed a €20 note on the pavement. Which one picked the €20 up?

The intelligent woman of course...the other two don't exist.



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A surgical patient wakes up after an operation and is told he's got to be opened up again - it seems the surgical team left a pair of rubber gloves inside him. The patient says, 'Couldn't I just pay for them?'

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The editor, Mick, can be contacted at mick.dreamscene@gmail.com or at 586 Dream Hills.

