

# The Front Desk



April 2010

¡Hola Clientes y Amigos!

What a month! The rain has stopped – more or less – and Michael reached the grand old age of sixty...and to be honest, he doesn't look a day over, well, sixty!! I had a great week with my family in Yorkshire and Jamie had a great week doing the gardening and the list of jobs I gave him to do while I was away.

## **Semana Santa**

Semana Santa (Easter) is upon us again with Jueves Santo and Viernes Santo (Maundy Thursday and Good Friday) on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> April respectively. So this newsletter will be reaching you a little earlier than usual. Our office – along with banks and most stores - will be closed on both days. However, I have checked with La Cañada and with El Corté Ingles and it seems that they are open on both days

Supermarkets and other stores will open again on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> and it will be business as usual for us from Monday 5<sup>th</sup>. As always our emergency helpline (**606 97 58 33**) will be manned throughout this period. Do you and your guests have it programmed into your mobile phones?

## **Motorway Tolls**

Take a look at this link <http://www.autopistadelso.com/ausol1-esp/prices.htm> and you will be able to check the motorway toll prices. The “tarifa normal” applies from October to May, with the exception of the one week either side of Easter. The “tarifa especial” applies for the remainder of the year, i.e. June to September.

## **Tourism**

Figures for January indicate a slight increase in arrivals over the same period in 2009. The main increases have been in visitors from Italy (up 19.1%), Switzerland (up 16.5%), Belgium and France (5.9% and 5.5% respectively). Offsetting this however has been the decline in visitors from Britain who form the biggest group (down 8.1%) and Germany (down 6.3%).

## **Retirement Age in Spain**

The socialist Spanish government proposals to raise the retirement age from 65 to 67 have sparked a storm of protest across the country. The move has the support of the opposition Partido Popular, but is likely to be strongly resisted by the two powerful trade unions, the UGT and the CC.OO, which have maintained a powerful grip on employment law in Spain and the associated high social costs which employers have to support.

## **Malaga Airport**

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March marked the opening of the new Terminal 3 at Malaga Airport by King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia. Malaga is Spain's oldest airport which continues to operate on the same site – the first flight landed there in 1919 when Michael was still a baby!! Unlike the opening of Terminal 5 at Heathrow in London, the first day of operation went without a hitch. For those of you interested in finding out more, click here [http://www.aena.es/csee/Satellite?pagename=PlanMalaga&Language=EN\\_GB](http://www.aena.es/csee/Satellite?pagename=PlanMalaga&Language=EN_GB).

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## **Judo Champion**

Most of you will know that our trusty colleague, Rodd, is a Third Dan judo black belt. For this reason alone he is held in high respect!!! However, we now find that his Nº 2 son, Lea aged 40, has been awarded his Fourth Dan by the Vice President of the British Judo Council after beating four other black belts – all about half his age – in a contest in Nottingham in March. We will follow his career. Remember, you read it here first, folks!!!

## **Almost On Stage...**

This month Jamie was the lighting and sound man for the ITS (International Theatre Studio) production of Willy Russell's comedy "One For the Road". Famous for his poignant scripts with a Liverpuddlian theme, this play was very popular with the audience – well acted and, of course, with fantastic lighting and sound effects!!!

Our next theatrical outing will be a "Murder Mystery" to be performed during and after dinner at Armstrongs Restaurant in Manilva on Friday the 16<sup>th</sup> of April. (<http://www.armstrongs-restaurant.com>) For those of you in residence at the time, this is an event not to be missed. Let me know if you would like to experience a spine-chilling evening!!

## **Marketing**

We have taken a half page advertisement in the special supplement issued by Sur in English to complement its presence at the "A Place in the Sun" exhibition in Earls Court London (26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> March). The supplement will also be issued with Sur today on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March. Our advert is emphasising new areas of work that we are developing: construction and community administration. In particular, we think that we have a lot to offer from a customer service and quality perspective in the field of community administration – we are already offering maintenance and cleaning services in three urbanisations and are tendering to work in others.

## **Spanish Lotteries**

The Spanish love their lotteries and, as part of his plan to integrate himself into Spanish society, Michael has now started regularly to buy lottery tickets from the street traders who call into cafés and restaurants. So far he has been very lucky this year, winning 1.50 € for an outlay of only 25 €. He hopes his continued success will assure him of a comfortable retirement. If nothing else he is finding it fun to chat with these street traders – they don't understand his Castillian and he doesn't understand their Andaluz. Ah! The art of communication...

## **London Marathon**

This month we are pleased to feature our client, Mark Roberts. A couple of years ago Mark asked us to sponsor him on his first marathon run and we were happy to do this. Marathon running and fund raising has now become part of Mark's life and this year he and his daughter, Hayley, are running for Whizz-Kidz: a charity that is all about giving disabled children the chance to lead more independent lives, providing for their individual mobility needs and ensuring they get the right mobility equipment, advice and training. Mark has often been asked: "Why do you run?" and, when he published his answer, we thought that it was a fun and poignant response. He has given us permission to add it to this newsletter and I hope that you find it of interest. You may even want to sponsor him yourself or be inspired to take up marathon running.

## **May Holiday Dates**

The Stonehewers are heading off once again at the beginning of May to Greece. It's becoming quite a tradition for us – as it's the fourth time in as many years that we're going to be hitting the land of Ouzo and Aphrodite. Michael will be pleased he's not getting a Stick of Rock for the 4<sup>th</sup> year running (I think!!!)

I hope you all have a great Easter. Until next month, hasta luego.

*Beverley*

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## "Why I Run" – A Personal Tale by Mark Roberts

*"In running, it doesn't matter whether you come in first, in the middle of the pack, or last. You can say 'I have finished.' There is a lot of satisfaction in that."*

My daughter, Hayley and I began running in September 2007. Hayley suggested running in the London Marathon to raise money for the Hospice that looked after "Grandpa Bob", my Dad, who died in March 2007 after battling against cancer for many years. It seemed a good idea at the time; the race was still six months away, it gave me a goal to help me get fit and lose some weight. I'd been a regular at the gym, but never a runner and although I considered myself "fairly fit for a fattish fifty year old", my first struggles to run just two miles made the marathon seem an impossible dream.

So, I researched the internet, bought magazines, resolved to eat "healthily" and discovered training plans. I bought running shoes, socks and the right "kit"; I really looked like a runner, especially if I ran at night. But my trump card was to seek advice from my running mentor the "marathon man", my Uncle Paul, 83 year old veteran of nearly 20 marathons, with an MBE for fund-raising, who for 20 years had encouraged (I hesitate to say nagged) me to run. I told Hayley that if Uncle Paul can still run marathons after a heart attack and he's over 80, he must have some real insight into running. I wanted more than "put lots of vaseline on your toes and nipples", with my uncle's tips; I could get a real boost! Well, we sat down and I was ready for the inside track, the pearls of wisdom. He said he always found something that worked for him in races; I sharpened my pencil; I opened my ears; he said "I find a girl with a nice bottom and try to follow her". Pleasant enough advice, but hardly the short cut to beating Paula Radcliffe and not much help at all for Hayley.

I now know that there is no short cut; just lots of training. In the winter it means going out in snow, sleet, rain, frost; up and down hills, numb fingers, pulled muscles, blisters on feet; if anyone wants to join Hayley and me for running please let me know. Although this may sound a bit unattractive, once you get used to it, running becomes a way of life.

Anyway, in 2007 we started training, building up from a couple of miles to 12 miles by December. Unfortunately, Hayley injured her knee and reluctantly pulled out of the London Marathon; so I was "on my own"! Training on my own was OK; I learned to use an iPod (the joggers' essential). Hayley and I both ran in 2009, raising over £5,000 for the Hospice. This year I do have the great pleasure of training regularly with Hayley and my brother, David who is a marathon virgin in the Virgin London Marathon. So in 2010, including my Uncle Paul, there will be four members of my family running!

Although not running in 2008, Hayley was very supportive. Among other things, she decorated my running shirt with my name and West Ham symbol; thus I was able to receive encouragement from spectators, "come on MARK" and abuse from Millwall supporters, "\*\*\*\* \* MARK".

The London Marathon itself is a great day out, (if you ignore the 26.2 mile run). Even getting on the tube at Buckhurst Hill I saw other Marathon Runners. Practically the whole race is lined with spectators yelling encouragement, giving out sweets and fruit for energy and the runners are a sea of charity shirts and costumes. In 2008, I was pleased to pass half a dozen rhinos thinking that I'd be really embarrassed to be beaten by someone in such ridiculous costumes, but I hurt my knee and they all passed me along the embankment.

Apart from the obvious thrill of running next to someone dressed as a gorilla, making it to where my supporters (Sharon, Nicola, David, Greg, and Hayley in 2008) were watching, the race was fantastic, but actually finishing was the best part; I felt I'd achieved something; I can now call myself a marathon runner. It's not as snappy as fairly fit for a fattish fifty year old, but more satisfying; until someone asks me what time I did and I tell them 5 hours 17 minutes (which, as everyone knows, is about ten minutes slower than those rhinos).

Hayley and I are particularly grateful for my wife Sharon's support (not least for washing our kit every day) and the generosity of all the people that sponsor us. This year we run for Whizz-Kidz a charity that is all about giving disabled children the chance to lead more independent lives, providing for their individual mobility needs and ensuring they get the right mobility equipment, advice and training.

Whizz-Kidz is the working name of The Movement for Non-Mobile Children (registered charity number 802872). Any contributions are very gratefully received! Help us make a difference. **Please sponsor us in the London Marathon:**

<http://www.justgiving.com/Mark-Roberts2>

<http://www.justgiving.co.uk/Hayley-Roberts>

or send your donation to me at Regency House, Kings Place, Buckhurst Hill Essex, IG9 5EB

*"We are different, in essence, from other men. If you want to win something, run 100 meters. If you want to experience something, run a marathon." -Emil Zatopek*

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