

Spanish Written “Conversation”

Well our August topic of “my first day at school” proved to be one of very bad memories and unforgettable terrors and traumas! I just hope that today’s primary school teachers are more sensitive to the damage that they can unwittingly cause.

The embarrassing memory of being made to sit in a line in a classroom on potties at 11am exactly, still has one of our members squirming.

The horrors of being made to lie down for an hour’s afternoon nap after lunch in total silence (probably to give the teacher a break) still give several of the group the ab dabs. One of our group had the misfortune of being taught by the same teacher who had taught his Dad, who had in his day brought a mouse to school in his pocket and when it escaped Miss Harvey ended up standing on a desk screaming while the children all cheered. So as soon as Miss Harvey realised that this was the son of that miscreant from 32 years earlier, she brought the poor shy five-year-old to stand at the front of the class and traumatised him for life with a severe warning about not bringing animals to school. The sins of our fathers!! Pleasanter memories were of milk drunk from small glass bottles with a straw, although sometimes in summer they were warm and probably a major health hazard. Also, of playing hopscotch, jumping games with a skipping rope, kicking a ball around the playground or against a wall, wonderful climbing frames, although a fall was a painful experience as it was straight onto hard ground- no padded mats in those days.

Another of our group was a “May to August child”, as with an August birthday he didn’t go to school until May, when the rest of the class had been there from September, so in his mind he is still trying to catch up on those lost months of schooling. It was also very hard to concentrate in his class, as it was next to a Goodyear factory, so the horrible smell of burning rubber and the clanking of the goods waggons were a constant distraction. A rebellious member of our group was not happy with being marched into school and thrust into the mayhem of a classroom. He screamed non-stop, threw sand from the sand pit all over the classroom floor and worst of all, then threw a toy truck hard at the teacher! so his mother was summoned, and he was sent home in disgrace.

My parents decided not to pass on their poor English to me, so we only spoke Polish at home, and they sent me to school without a single word of English. Traumatic indeed, as some of the adults thought that by talking at us very loudly, they might make us understand. There was a small group of us Poles and one of my best friends, also sadly lacking the language to ask permission to go to the toilet had an accident in class, which reduced us all to floods of tears and a determination never to go back to school. But it is amazing how quickly children can learn a language when they have to, so we all caught up pretty quickly after a few rocky weeks. The lesson learned for life was that in a new country always find out first how to say where is the bathroom?

Our September topic is a favourite museum and why. Hopefully a much less traumatic discussion.

The Spanish PDD - 5 words a week group continues, and we are now on the 130th word. Freud would probably have a field day analysing my mental deterioration during this pandemic based on the words and then the sentences I pick to show how to use the word. I try hard not to be repetitive, but it still feels a lot like Groundhog Day, for those that know the film.

Stay safe everyone. We will get through this.... Eventually.

Lusia