

## **News Bulletin**

Good morning and welcome. Andrew Marshall, the talented actor and storyteller came, saw and definitely won the audiences' favour. Do we change over the years? Yes, we do. For the better, for the worse, that is not for you to say. Non-marital cohabitation, where is it now five years on? We'll see. First a quick round-up of local news by Pilar.

The conclusions from a recent survey on eating habits and healthy nutrition in the region have been released and have left very few people happy. The findings point to figures of obesity and unhealthy eating habits well above national figures. The study also urges everybody to grow more aware of the lethal implications of high cholesterol.

Extracurricular activities might be on their way out if school subordinates do not back down. They are up in arms about what they claim to be unpaid overtime they are forced to do as those activities take place outside the school times. Nobody seems to know how to tackle this crisis as it may have exposed a legal vacuum.

A warehouse in Villalonguejar industrial estate where Burgos History Library's books and manuscripts have been temporarily stored, was flooded due to heavy rains. As a result, up to 385 boxes containing records dating back to the XVIII century were damaged.

All owners of the flats making up the 29 low-rise buildings in the Plaza Mayor have given their approval to the subsidized property upgrade scheme that seeks to give a facelift to all buildings and a harmonious look.

Back to you Javier.

Here are some comment which, I'm sure, will ring a bell to you. If you consider yourself quite an average person, in any sense, your personality and character have typically changed as you went through the stages of life.

Let's go over it and see whether these comments bring a smile into your face. If they do, I'll know straightaway that I got it right.

When you were an infant.... Yes, you were a two, three-year-old little fellow at some stage, probably a long way back in time. You were very much given to tantrums and seeking attention from your parents but they set firm boundaries and did not let go. No smacking, though, as your parents did not want to lower your self-esteem ..... What did they...Well probably, not very often. You were baby-faced, playful and candid. Your outlook on parental authority? I am sure that it reflected admiration and generally, submission despite tantrums. After all, you knew that alongside your parents you were on the safe side. How do you view others? as equals, playmates, not much competition getting in the way.

We all grow from infancy into childhood. We become a little bit self-centered. Very energetic too, as we can play and play for hours on end while those adults around us find it really difficult to keep pace with us. We all love those carefree days as nothing mattered much as long as daddy or mummy were there for us. We were very gullible, probably too gullible. Our parents' authority is still unquestionable, and we cling to them for protection and support. When we are with our pals, we sometimes struggled for leadership in some areas but very readily conformed easily in others.

We eventually entered adolescence. What a change! We are idealist young fellows, and that's wonderful. We aim high, we seem to be capable of pursuing very good causes and serve others, but, on the other hand, we become fault-finding and truly demanding, and our parents resent that. Particularly when we display mood swings. Our parents see their advice, recommendations and requests constantly challenged and questioned. We get defiantly independent, unruly, and rebellious. In others we seek sympathy, approval and recognition.

That too passes and we turn into mature hot-blooded young fellows, ambitious and self-confident. That gives us determination to overcome difficulties and resourcefulness to face up to challenges. We know that success can only come after effort and perseverance. We seek support and guidance from our parents, and that they love and appreciate, but only on what is not intimate and personal. When we are with friends we share views on most issues and accept others' critically.

Then middle age comes and with it greater equanimity. We tend to be fairly materialistic and competitive, particularly if we are doing money wise. We are also practical and realistic. We come back fully to our parents and appreciate their experience and care despite conflicting values and education. As to others, we value enduring friendships and view others, very often, as people to compete with socially and professionally.

## **Non-marital cohabitation**

In the twenty-first century, fewer households conform to what was once the family norm of two married parents, father working outside the home with mother looking after the children and home full-time. New alternative family patterns with striking differences have emerged, both in their make-up and in the roles entrusted, but there is something that surely binds them together: they all eagerly claim the right to be equally protected by the law.

Among the types of domestic units which are struggling for increased recognition is non-marital cohabitation, that is, couples who move into a flat or house without first going up the aisle. Despite newly released figures which seem to indicate a rise in their number, the overall net figure of cohabitating partners, relative to those who chosen to wed, remains very low, in the region of 2%. Their motives of course vary. Some do so as a form of trial marriage, intended to wed if the relationship withstands the test of intimate everyday domesticity. Others make a positive commitment to live and bring up their children together free from the traditional marital bond.

Burgos, like many other city councils and regional parliaments, was fairly fast to set up a register for partnerships or cohabitating partners. By February next year, it will have been in existence for 6 years.

We are joined now by Cesar who has been looking at the legal implications of which legal path you chose to go.

**H** Good morning Cesar, how are you.

**I** Not bad, Javier.

**H** Somewhere between simple cohabitation and conventional, long-standing marriage, we have defined a new legal concept which carries some legal effects, rights and duties: registered partnerships. Was I right in saying *some* effects?

**I** Absolutely right, Javier. The legal effects granted are limited, much fewer than those granted to relationships with a full status, that is marriage.

**H** So they remain unions with a second-class status?

**I** Well, that might lead to misunderstandings. The demands for legal protection have been heard loud and clear particularly because of some influential lobbies entering the debate, such as the gay and lesbian lobby. They have pushed hard to get personal relationships between people fully recognized and protected by law.

**H** But gay and lesbian lobbies pushed for equality at a time when gay marriage was out of the question.... and now that form of marriage has been enshrined in the law, on equal footing with heterosexual marriages ....

**I** ..... so the motivation has died down and cohabitation has made a stop-over, probably for long, halfway through. It has not arrived at where they wanted to go.

**H** Full legal status.

**I** Correct

**H** Which are the rights at stake?

**I** Property rights, who owns what, government and private retirement benefits, inheritance, children's rights, alimony and maintenance. Mainly those.

**H** How many have unmarried couples duly registered been granted effectively?

**I** Those obvious ones

**H** What do you mean?

**I** The ones that you would be granted regardless of your status and for the sake of goodness and mercy: maintenance for the partner who has contributed only housework and parental responsibility for both partners on account of their parenthood.

**H** illegitimacy has lost its stigma, has it?

**I** Yes, out-of-wedlock births, if you like, are not as shameful as they were.

**H** One of the rights most persistently sought by those equal rights advocates is the entitlement to retirement benefits ...

**I** They have failed. This is only provided for in cases where the deceased is a spouse, somebody you have a marital bond with, not a cohabitee.

**H** In the Corporate world the rights of cohabitating partners have been advanced through collective agreements....

**I** ...which, by the way, are legally binding and enforceable. Yes, they have. In some agreements there are clauses that provide that, for example, any worker is entitled to say two days off on account of her partner undergoing major surgery.

**H** From some corners of society some have voiced their disagreement with what others see as self-evident. For example, the Constitutional Court have reiterated that the granting of equal rights is not undermined if some rights are kept for married couples as marriage is always an option.

**I** That's a good point. But equal rights advocates cling to an extended notion of family, a concept which is very vague but one which the Constitution guarantees protection for. For them a family may convey a household or domestic unit consisting of the members of a conventional family who live together, or one-parent households, or even two persons of the same sex occupying a single dwelling.

**H** I see. OK, Cesar. It was very insightful. Thank you.

**I** Thank you for having me on.

## School Board Elections

The slogan this year reads “Don’t miss out on this opportunity, cast your vote”. This November thousands of people somehow involved in education, in Burgos and elsewhere in the region are called to cast their vote and decide who is going to sit, to be a member of the next School Board.

We wanted to know the story from the inside, and Hanna has been following the events leading up to election day and has put some questions to key people.

**H** I’m joined by Ignacio Juanes, Head of Studies at the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas in Burgos and assistant to the Head of the Electoral Committee. Good morning, Nacho and thanks for putting your..., I guess very time-consuming duties aside for some time and talk to us.

**I** My pleasure. There’s plenty of things to do all right, but we can manage.

**H** I’m sure that your time has been gobbled up by tedious paperwork, never-ending meetings... Do you have to be extra careful in complying with detailed regulations as to how to proceed in the elections?

**I** yeah, well, you see We’ve been through this once in the past and election rules haven’t changed much. We can handle it fine. The voting registers are already out there for people to check and the deadlines are being met.

**H** Every time School Board Elections come around politicians are fast to use this rhetoric filled with high-sounding words such as democratic ways, elected representatives committed to serving schools, ..... Gives us a sense of what reality is really like.

**I** Being a board member is an unpaid job that is not demanding, time wise, but one through which you can make a real, palpable contribution to the educational community.

**H** By doing what, specifically?

**I** It is a long list, actually and I may miss some duties that Schools Boards are entrusted with ...

**H** Well focus on the most essential or relevant.

**I** The School Board is to give its approval to a set of guidelines or criteria on school finance and management issues. All of that is included in the School Blueprint.

**H** School Blueprint. It sounds very solemn...

**I** Yeah, it does. It is drawn up every four years. It has some say in the rules governing enrollment of students. It appoints and removes, if that were necessary, the nominated Principal...

**H** Have you ever had to remove a Principal?

**I** No, never, as far as I know. And last but not least, the School Board hears discipline incidents and related events and acts upon them.

**H** Very good, very powerful, too. Is everybody working at the school somehow represented?

**I** Absolutely. Teaching staff, office and cleaning staff, students, their parents, and the city council.

**H** The city council?

**I** That has proved to be very handy, because we pass complaints, suggestions and proposals affecting the school's management, its grounds, etc..

**H** One final question. How do you like your job?

**I** Vow, that's quite tricky now. It has its pluses and its minuses ...

**H** That was quite diplomatic of you. Thanks and I wish you lots of luck.

**I** Thank you.

But that was not all because Hanna had the opportunity to talk to a student who is, as everybody else, eligible to vote and be voted for.

**H** High Victoria. I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about this forthcoming School Board Elections.

**I** Oh, the elections. I have heard about them and I have seen the lists.

**H** You don't sound very enthusiastic. You are not looking forward to polling day, are you?

**I** I'll vote but I don't see how my vote can change much.

**H** You might then become a candidate and if voted in, have some say in what goes on at any given time.

**I** That requires a lot of time.

**H** Does it?

**I** Well, no. But it is an availability issue. You need to be available four or five times a year on week days at quite inconvenient times.

**H** Ill-timed meetings, no say in decision-making, any further complaints?

**I** liaison. I don't think that there are effective and fast ways for complaints or proposals to reach our representatives. And if they ever did. How should they know it is a relevant issue affecting many people?

**H** Can you not file a formal petition with say 100 signatures on it?

**I** Well, yeah. Sometimes we have done that. I remember signing a letter of complaint to be submitted to the Education Superintendent via the School Board asking him to remove the cap on the number of years allocated for each grade.

**H** Well you see. When there is a will..

**I** ..... there is a way.

**H** Thank you Victoria. See you.

**I** Thank you. Bye.

Very interesting, indeed, and thought-provoking. Needless to say, though that removing the cap is out of the question according to educational officials.