

ONLY FOR THREE MONTHS!

1937 - 1948

A Journey.
M & J-M. Armolea-Bustamante

Memories.
Jose & Martin Armolea.

1937.

The reason to start with at the beginning of the Civil war really which was about to begin & have a traumatic affect on the Armolea family, & in this case two brothers who were to embark on a long journey that was to be only for a few weeks & lasted a lifetime.

Our Father was a hard working man & provided for the needs of his family at present a Policeman but has been a fireman, painter, bricklayer & many others so long as it put food on the table.

Our Mother, a frail, very kind woman, who only cared about the wellbeing of her family, three boys & one girl Victoria 15 years, Martin 13 years, Jose 11 years & Angel 4 years. Describing the siblings, it might help to describe them briefly:

Victoria, very much a girl of the time, in wanting to have a good time, dancing, wanting boys to admire her much more than her matured older cousin Elisa with her "Film Star looks". Of course she had to get rid of her frustrations by bossing us boys about, but she soon had to accept her responsibilities.

Martin, the clever one, the more serious & thinker of the boys never wanted to get his hands dirty, or go for errands, especially if Victoria was trying to boss him about.

Jose, always mischievous, wandering all over Portugalete swimming, or fishing either for eels or crabs.

Angel, too young to be allowed out, always playing with the neighbours kids.

The events of Sunday, 18th July 1936 will be on my mind, forever. Portugalete was always famous for it's Fiestas (La Romeria), La Cucaina, regatta & it's dancing in the main square, well known on a Sunday from far afield. The band is playing it's usual Paso Doble. Father has gone to the Theatre in Bilbao, Mother is on the balcony with Auntie Julia watching the crowd passing below on their way to the dance.

The events of Sunday 18th July 1936 with the dancing in full swing, the band playing as usual the famous Paso Doble was brought to an abrupt halt with the announcement of the rebellious uprising. The men parted from the women, advising them to collect the family & go home. They in turn mounted, whatever transport was available & went in the direction of Political Centres & main offices of the town. Father had gone to the Theatre in Bilbao, but, we were not to see him for a few days as he spent most of his time in the Police Headquarters.

The family were soon to reach home, Victoria got home first, very much scared of the consequences. Martin had left the company of the older boys & found me in the kiosk where the band played. When we arrived home, Mum was happy we were all safe, of course, Aunt Julia with all our cousins were there, it was common for a get together, as they only lived a few doors away & it was time for people to gather & talk about the situation as everyone was scared.

Our father wasn't political but he was working class & a Republican but to this day I can't understand how he allowed us, Martin & I to become "Pioneros", we had an Uncle in Baracaldo, he was head of the "Casa del Pueblo" which is a Socialist Party Centre (uncle on our father's side). After WW11, we received a letter from him in France, begging for help.

Uncle Julio Curiel was Chief of Police in Portugalete & very political, he was also very stern with his 4 children & scared Martin & me, very much. He was also very helpful to both families in commandeering a lorry to evacuate Portugalete on our way to Santona to get a fishing boat, to get to France & safety, unfortunately not for him.

Life started to change very quickly, I don't remember which school Victoria went, but I suppose she would have left by now, Martin went to a higher school near La Florida district, I went to a junior school next to the Church, both were close. The summer was still good, as the war had not affected us all that much, so we continued swimming, fishing & messing about in boats. The street gang was dominated by the older boys, the younger ones just followed. In previous years there was a big flow of ships to the Altos Hornos in Sestao, whilst in dock they used to come in rowing boats for provisions in the Market which meant Martin & Co would offer to look after their rowing boats while they did their shopping, it wasn't always a good idea for them, as we were in a different place when they came back.

Swimming as I mentioned before was a major preoccupation during the summer & on two occasions Martin was very brave with ships still going up & down whilst crossing the river with two others in reach of pine trees in a small wood on the Las arenas side of the river, I had to take their clothes in a sack, using the rowing boat ferry & taking back the pine cones, as well. On another occasion, a moment of madness happened, when he climbed a large crane & jumped headfirst into the water. The activities of the young were varied & always with Martin in the frame, each one had a job to do, he was in charge of a fire prepared in a secluded part of the street, others had to go to the market & "borrow" some potatoes, peppers etc. Catching crabs with a piece of string & a bit of fish at the end to be lowered in a tin can, this was Martin's job. Towards the end of the year, life began to deteriorate, especially food. Martin & I on one occasion looking out from the balcony in our flat & saw a lonely ship we presume to be British & a cargo of food was a welcome sight. Having been cut off from the rest of Spain, news spread fast if its contents & meant our food rations would be met. Martin & I had the job of going all over Portugalete & join the queues, which always meant food was available be it beans or even chocolate. On another occasion, we would go with a big basin to get coal, & on the way back, we witnessed a "dog fight" between a German & a Russian "Chato" planes, very popular as they were the only form of defence. About this time, a bomb destroyed the last block of flats in our street. Soon afterwards, the tunnel near the railway station became a bomb shelter on a permanent basis with mothers & children running in as soon as the siren sounded. As Victoria was looking after Angel, she became mother of the house, also the boss.

By this time, father had joined the Armed Forces & was on the outskirts of Bilbao in Monte Gorbea, it wasn't trench warfare but high-mountain guarding the approaches to Vizcaya. Mother volunteered & was Chief Cook in a small military hospital, taking over a large house from a rich landlord. Wood for the range was a very important item, Martin & I were always looking for wood, especially floating down river. We also had an idea of bringing home an old railway sleeper which had been left in the sidings. This proved to be a disaster as we were in the process; his grip failed & crushed his fingers. This was a bad reminder, some months before whilst playing about in one of the train coaches left in the sideings, he also hurt his hand on moving a door.

This was handy as Martin & I used to go & see Mum & have a good meal at the same time, we met the patients, especially a German who came to the kitchen with his arm in plaster & a frame holding his arm in place. This was all before the International Brigades. On this particular day, it was frightening with the wounded. As we left the Hospital & the German planes were flying very low & trying to destroy the bridge but failed. Three planes failed, & all their bombs fell in the water. As the hospital was near the beach & at the end of the famous "Paseo", it continued to the Farol where we hid under the walkway. Eventually, we got home safely. Christmas came & passed us

bye, except Los Reyes Magos when we managed to get a little money from the family, only for Martin to lose it all gambling "La Garza" with other boys, we ended up having a good telling off from Mother. Life was very full, but soon changed for the worse when Martin & I nearly killed Angel & his friend, from next door, Mum was at work & Dad was at the front. On his travels, he acquired a shotgun & brought it home when he came home on leave, but left it under lock & key when he went back. Martin & I, full of bravado & trying to show off, found the key to the cupboard. We brought our friends from next door & showed them the gun & its safety lever. Not content, we found the cartridges & loaded it, showing it how impossible it was to fire in the locked position, with too many hands handling the gun it is impossible to remember who actually moved the safety lever. Luckily, the gun was pointed to the floor, but Angel & his friend about 6-7 metres away in the kitchen playing on father's toolbox ended with a lot of pellets all over their face & body, also a big patch of lino, was ruined. When Mum came home she was very upset & angry but after a good telling off thought it was best if we stayed with Auntie for a couple of days. The event passed with little recrimination, the gun disappeared & father was at the front, fighting. We saw him a few weeks later when he came home on leave, he had heard about the evacuation of children to England. Martin & I were not aware at the time but he had put our names down, Angel was too young, Victoria had to stay behind to look after him as mother was working.

1937:

The war was getting closer, Martin & I heard about a ship bombarding the Campsa oil depositary in Santurce, some went as far as the beach to see them burning furiously. This was a prelude to the bombing of Guernica which accelerated the evacuation of the Basque children. Martin probably knew more about our journey, all I can remember is father coming home on leave, mother getting two parcels of clothing for us that was meant for a few weeks.

The day of departure was very solemn, very little was spoken & it was obvious we would walk to Santurce, as mum had to go to work we went in her direction & said our goodbyes. In the hospital, as we thought it was only for a few weeks, not as it turned out in the end. We arrived at the ship's moorings & it was chaos, the Habana had docked a few days before which gave us an indication of our departure. As mother could not come to see us off, so we said our goodbyes to father, Victoria & Angel.

We boarded the ship & from now on, Martin was in charge, he found two metal bunks & went away to find the mattresses. The ship started moving in the early hours of the morning, it was a terrible journey, I don't know about Martin but, I was sick for the next 24 hours. Arriving in Southampton has been well documented & the entrance to the Camp has been a feature never to forget. The facilities in the Camp were well organised & it was fun at first, with mountains of clothes & shoes. Martin was always with the older boys & me with the juniors, but we were in the same tent. We played "Boy Scouts" which was fun, but will never forget the shock we had when it was announced over the loudspeakers the fall of Bilbao to Franco's forces. To say that we all went mad was an understatement; the older boys went to the docks, to get a ship home. Martin stayed with me, we were concerned about our families. The camp was searched & the boys were brought back.

The nightmare had begun, we had a long journey to Brechfa, by coach & we were tired but first, we had to organise bedding without supervision, then the famous corned-beef sandwiches, with one person to look after 70 boys. The camp was a Minors rehabilitation centre, but not for boys without supervision which led to a very

unfortunate incident. After a few days having explored the site which was very pleasant with a small river running alongside the camp, life became very dull & the older boys began to wander outside the camp to a very small village, just over a mile away. Eventually, a group of three boys arrived in the camp with a tale of having been beaten by the villagers, the camp was in turmoil & the older boys decided they would teach the villagers a lesson. Martin told me before he left, not to leave the camp so I stayed behind with the other juniors, word got to the Police in Carmarthen, 10 miles away. The march to the village was stopped half-way, dispersing the boys who many had to cross the river fully clothed, to reach the camp. There was bad treatment from the Police, my own experience was frightening when a policeman chased us into our Nissan Hut, we hid under our beds when he hit the metal roof with his truncheon, making a deafening noise. Martin came looking for me after the police had left. It was many years later that we learned that questions had been asked about us in the House of Commons with demands by the Tories to be sent back to Franco.

Life certainly changed for the better, when we had a coach load of people from Carmarthen with sympathy & lots of presents arrived. Martin & I became very friendly with a shopkeeper & his family, we were very upset when we had to leave eventually, because of the approaching winter, (there was a months stopover in Newcastle-Emlyn).

We left Wales by train, making a night stopover in London's, East-End, arriving in Margate the following day to find a large house with enough room for a separate boys & girls section, playing fields & gardens in which to lose yourself all day. Settling down in the house with a big dormitory, Martin & I were separated but were lucky to have a bit of schooling, which came to an end due to a lack of suitable Spanish teachers. We found playing football a good way of passing the day. As for Martin, he never came out to play, he was more interested in learning the English language.

1938.

Christmas came & went, without us noting the difference, except the very cold weather. We used to spend the day in front of the coal fires, in the leisure rooms. Just before Christmas we had a letter from Victoria who gave us an account of their lives since they left Portugalete, lucky to have just in time, reached France, father had also crossed the frontier into Cataluna to continue the fight. With spring approaching, we had a big surprise by sending us juniors to proper English School. Martin had lessons in "La Colonia" under a good teacher, Snr. Lazareno. The juniors couldn't follow the English lessons, as our understanding of the language wasn't good enough, but, we were kept quiet with magazines & books with pictures.

Luckily, we were pleased to enjoy sports & became very successful in sports which came to an abrupt end with our successful sports day. Martin & I continued to see each other mostly at lunchtime & bedtime, as we shared the same bedroom, he had his mates, & I had mine. There was only football for boys of my age, but more serious affairs for Martin & his friends. This brings me to a very sad moment in our lives. Martin & his friends had gone on a cultural excursion to Canterbury, at this time we had the occasional letter from Victoria & Mum in France, this day, because he was not there, it was handed to me. On opening the letter, I learnt that our Mum had died, which distressed me very much & had special care for a few days. When Martin arrived back & learnt the news, he was very upset & more so with me, for opening the letter. So there are Martin & Jose in England, Victoria & Angel to fare for themselves in France & father in Spain not knowing the fate of his family.

The year ended with the occasional letter from Victoria & Angel who were being pushed around, all over France, father had sent bad news from Spain. We were lucky

in one way as we were to learn later on that Margate was a transit camp for the return of children back to Spain.

1939.

Christmas, or Reyes Magos didn't enter our minds as before, these holidays were a thing of the past, not that we enjoyed a life of luxury, it was a family get-together with chocolate & biscuits for breakfast, to start the day was typical for the Christmas Holidays.

Life in Margate continued, as before, but we had finally achieved normal school classes even though at times, it was difficult to maintain regular Spanish Teachers & this was a good time for Luis Sanz to step in as a teacher in an emergency. As the spring was approaching, & apart from the cleaning of the dormitories, & dining hall, my friend & I had duties in the vegetable garden, Martin was involved in the orchard. We heard a rumour that the "Colonia" was in trouble, financially, so we had to help. There was a lot of excitement with the measures that had taken place. Firstly a football team made up of seniors, was selected, this team was to prove very successful, in matches all over Kent. I was picked for a lot of concerts which were well attended, the girls were very busy in the county, good in sewing Basque National Costumes to present at Basque Dances at the Summer Fetes (with the boys in white) in the grounds of the "Colonia". Summer over, Martin became ill, I didn't understand what was going on, when he was admitted to Hospital at the other end of Margate. I was not allowed to go on my own to see him, so had to rely on the Head, Mr. Lawder to take me, but it was not often as he was a very busy man.

September (1939) came & also the start of WW11. Margate is very close to the French coast, so first Martin was moved inland to a big hospital outside Reading, we were separated for a few months, the only contact was by letter & had to rely on a lot of people to achieve this. I had a lot of correspondence from him including photographs of him & his friends, he was very popular & started a lot of courses & was very happy, considering the circumstances he found himself in. I did have a letter from Victoria, she & Angel found themselves in a lot of trouble with Mum gone, they didn't get the help they needed & they were advised to return to Spain.

The Spanish Civil War was coming to an end & had a letter from father who had crossed the frontier into France, he was hoping to find Victoria & Angel who were held in terrible conditions by the French military. I was sent to Rowley lodge in Arkley, the purpose of this move was to start work as funds for the upkeep of the house was beginning to be tight. This meant that I couldn't see Martin for over a year, we were in touch by post, although, not regularly.

With Christmas approaching, I was sent to work in Borehamwood, still wearing short trousers covered by overalls & hobnailed boots for footwear. It was significant that an English boy, 18 months older than me started at the same time & he befriended me & became my saviour.

1940

The New Year started very cold with a lot of snow, but it didn't stop one other Spanish boy & myself going to work for 12s/3d per week. We had to give our wages over to the Colony & in return we received 1 shilling, pocket money. Naturally we used to walk to work & save our Bus Fare so we could go to the pictures at the weekend. The factory was Keystone Knitting Mills & was the biggest employer in town, making ladies garments, stockings in particular & I was in the product finishing department. From about 30 men, it came down to 5 youths due to the call-up to the Army. The reason I wrote this is because the months went by & very little happened to change my life until one of these men took pity on me & took me one Sunday,

before he went into the Army, to see Martin in Reading, for which I was very grateful. Because of the uncertainty, Martin was very surprised & happy to see me, so with extra time allowed on this visit, we had a very good day & registered bus & train times for further visits.

My stay in Rowley Lodge was very good & was a happy Colonia with a crowd of boys & girls, which wasn't a big home & we got on very well with each other. Now that we were going to work & more responsible, we had more freedom & had a few pennies in our pockets, could go out on our own. The war up to now had not affected us too much but it was about to change. My English workmate, Ron White asked if I could come to his house for one weeks summer holiday spent with his Mother & Father, which I happily agreed. An agreement was reached with the family that I could stay longer & was to last over 4 years, what with the war going badly, Dunkirk & so on, my mate (Ron), volunteered for the Army, though by the time he was accepted, I ended up with a room of my own. War was affecting us at work as air raids became a day & nightly routine with the big Elstree Studios, the target. We could also see the glow of fires glowing as London was burning, we also had to stop going to the Air-Raid Shelters, due to pressure of work.

1941 (A second visit).

I managed to visit Martin that year which I was lucky to complete. As foreign aliens, we were issued with documents which restricted our movements, & we had to apply for permission. I remember walking from Reading (Bracknell) Station to the hospital, a mile or so on a rural road, with my sandwiches & a bottle of lemonade, sitting on a grass verge, eating it before entering the hospital. I noticed lots of covered mounts on the side of the road, not taking any noticing what they were, tucking away on my sandwiches, a soldier appeared on a bicycle, telling me that I was not allowed to tinker around, I was to learn later that it contained ammunition of all kinds, ready to fight the Germans if they decided to invade England, as we expected at any time. My stay with Mr & Mrs White, in Borehamwood, was a happy one. The arrangements were to hand my wages to Mrs White to pass onto Rowley Lodge, which La Colonia were glad to receive. This was to end after a few months, as the White family had little money to spare, so with Clive, gone, job changes & better wages, I became a "lodger" paying for my keep & lodging, a little at that time. It was difficult & explains why at that time, I kept away from La Colonia as most of my wages were kept by the Mrs White & had no money to pass (donate) on, it was also unfortunate (or lucky) that soon after I left La Colonia, their troubles began with the bomb, exploding, near where my room would have been, the boys & girls were moved to another site in High Barnet, only to have the misfortune of a land mine dropped by the Germans, nearby. This was the last episode that put paid to the happy Colonia & I spent the next few years with little contact with my mates & practically forgetting our language. After about a year, I joined the White family my English mate who invited me to his house left for the Army & weren't able to make the trip to see Martin. But in our department in the factory, one of the men took pity on me & took me to see Martin, I was very happy that day as it had been a long time since Margate & hadn't forgotten he was my older brother.

This period of time is very vague, I don't remember any visits to the hospital, but we kept in touch by letter. Martin had been bedridden since he was admitted to hospital, in Margate. He was very happy & popular with the doctors & other patients & I never saw him depressed, with his lot & I don't remember his first time out of bed or hospital. In Borehamwood, a Spanish mate who stayed in lodgings in town & I, started piano lessons which we had to pay for & my recollections of events, start from

then. Martin had now started a job with the Spanish Relief agency & he was able to arrange for funds to pay for our lessons.

My brother was lodging in a house in Earls Court with other Spanish boys & girls (Octavio, Mari-Luth. Espe, Bautista, Laura etc) & he started to be active in the "Hogar Espanol" which is where I often saw him; although my visits to London were rare, this was due to the distance involved & air-raids, at the time.

I became aware that Martin was going out with a girl called Maisie, they met in the dance hall next door to Bayswater Tube Station, where a large group of Basque boys & other Spanish friends met on Saturday evenings to meet & dance with the Irish girls, it was very near to the Basque Hogar, which was in Queens Rd. There was a scarcity of Spanish girls & there was very little romancing but a lot of parties & most of them became "pairs" in a semi-friendly way as they all lived in this big house, run by Mrs xxxxx, who was very strict, none of the large group of boys & girls ever talked about marriage. Martin & Maisie were going out together for some months & Maisie being a nurse had very little time off, & occasionally she would stay in the big house with the girls.

After a while Martin told me they were going to get married. I don't remember when I first met Maisie as I was still living with the White family in Borehamwood. So the wedding was a bit of a shock as Martin's wages was very poor & of course, Maisie's pay as a nurse, was even worse. They didn't want to ask her father for money, they got a bigger shock than me, as she had a better offer of marriage in Ireland, into a well to do family.

So, the wedding was a good opportunity for us three to get together & we saw a lot of each other planning the event. Firstly I must mention the Whites' eldest daughter had married the previous year, so her wedding dress fitted Maisie. For father in Spain, it was a big disappointment, as he wanted all his family, together, but didn't realise it was impossible, as Franco had sent him our call-up papers to join the Army. Father was more adamant about letting Victoria marry Ramon. To me it was important that we were family, respected his wishes as he was head of the family. Martin needed a suit, & it so happened that I had bought one recently & to our surprise, it fitted him. Weddings in those days were not like today, remember, we still had a war on, with clothes coupons & food rationing. You will see from photos of the wedding what a lovely day it was, finishing in a small Basque Restaurant in Hammersmith, eating Spanish food. Martin & Maisie managed to get a bedsitter in Dartmouth Rd, Kilburn. It was a big room with a bed in one corner, gas stove in the other, & a settee which came useful at times, also being at ground floor level, we had use of the garden.

I was still living in Borehamwood at the time, & some weekends, stayed with them. I was introduced to the Irish Dancehall, it was a bit of a nightmare at times for me, as my journey at night on a bicycle, arriving in Borehamwood, past midnight. Martin was very clever & was more manly than me & he was what I needed (support) as work & Borehamwood, started to become a problem, & being of an age that expected more of life, & was a bit rebellious at work. I forgot to mention the block of flats where a bomb fell near Kilburn Tube Station which was very close to their flat. So the rest of the year continued as before, work, cinema (1-2 times a week) & some weekends in the summer, the three of us going to the Irish Dancehall & sometimes afterwards, Saturday or Sundays getting on my bicycle home. I stayed sometimes because Pauline (Maisie's sister) came over from Ireland to work & stayed with them. Winter was a bit of a problem on the bike, so I would stay Saturday night with them & bussed it back, on Sunday morning. I forgot to mention the bus journey between

Hammersmith & Kensington High St, a buzz bomb fell in a side street which the three of us had just walked past.

This year was to be the eventful one with Maisie already showing signs of the baby to come. & worrying about new accommodation as Dartmouth Rd was not suitable for a baby. It was difficult & very expensive to get a flat, it was the "Rachman" era & this landlord with his gang of Spivs, dominated this area, having bought a lot of cheap houses & demanding high rents. The war was coming to an end & there was a shortage of houses for rent, as a lot of them were destroyed by bombing & new houses had not been built. Having begged the Rent-Collector for a larger flat, Martin & Maisie were offered a flat in 46, Anson Rd with a higher rent (£2.15) which they accepted, reluctantly. Because of the higher rent, Martin had to find a much harder job, it was 1945, in a foundry, heavy Industries with furnaces & lifting large pieces of metal. Like always, he never complained & his new wages were better than the office work he was used to, fortunately he was to meet a good friend in Enrique, a Spanish man from Valencia who had fought in the Spanish Civil War & ended up in North Africa where he joined the British Army & fought in Narvik in Norway where he was caught by the Germans. He eventually came to live near us in Chichele Rd, Cricklewood.

I don't remember exactly, the move from Dartmouth Rd to Anson Rd, nor when I went to live with Martin & Maisie, but we continued going dancing & during the winter, to the cinema to keep warm. In early May, prior to Tony's birth, Martin & I selfishly caught a bus close to Marble Arch to see the march-pass by troops to mark the end of the war. It was a very moving experience, with thousands of people lining the streets trying to get the best view of troops marching.

The flat in Anson Rd, was owned by this horrible man, who I mentioned before, who extracted very high rents from all the properties he owned. There were two other families living on the ground & first floor, Martin & Maisie occupied the top floor, two bedrooms & a diner with cooking facilities, described as a hole in the wall, as a kitchen, I don't remember living there as Pauline was occupying one of the rooms. Eventually Tony arrived & the family was complete, & Martin & Maisie were very happy. Summer came & also my memory, as I remember Maisie & Pauline going to the WestEnd which meant Oxford St & beyond, to look at the shops, more than anything else as there was little money to spend. On one of these trips, they managed to take Tony in the pram to Marble Arch. This was too far to retrace their journey & they were refused permission to take the pram down the escalator, so, Maisie with Tony in her arms continued on her way back home, & Pauline walked back with an empty pram attracting abuse from American soldiers when she passed their club, near Marble Arch.

A major event came with my memory in place with their trip to Ireland, Tony must have been a few months old & gave Martin & I the opportunity to be together. We spent the time as two mates, going to the Cinema, Dancehall & so on. What I can't remember is, who did the cooking, it couldn't have been me, all I remember is that sausage & mash was very popular at the time. All this is proof that I'd moved in & sleeping on a peculiar settee which was part of the furnished accommodation.

This was the time I was rebellious in Borehamwood & forced my employers to release me from my job. It was difficult to get employment afterwards, so I spent a couple of months working in the kitchen of the Strand Palace Hotel in Piccadilly, this followed a time in Timpos Toys, Tony was pleased with his cars & soldiers. My best friend was Enrique Jarero where we travelled to work in Slough (Timpos), for a short time. With the winter approaching, it was time for me to be useful. I became the

babysitter when Martin & Maisie went to the Jareros to play cards, which they often seemed to lose.

This was the year that started well, financially, & naturally Pauline & I were contributing to our upkeep. Maisie managed to get a job with Smith & Sons, as it was called then. The hours were 9-4 with 1 hour for lunch, she was able to put Tony in a nursery at the end of Anson Rd, this meant a long walk there & back to the High St, to catch a bus to work in Waterloo Rd, which was towards Neasden.

This certainly was the year for me as Maisie was well known & appreciated for her work in her dept, at work. She tested all the car clocks they were making. She spoke to the big boss (Foreman) about me needing a job, after an interview, I was taken on, this was with low wages until my birthday in September, employment that was to last 44 years until my retirement. Life continued as before, not as regular, but I was dancing every Saturday & with Pauline available, Martin & Maisie used to come as well. Martin & I paid a few visits to Highbury to see the Arsenal play, which was a long journey by bus to see the "Brylcreem Brothers (Compton), play. Arsenal was the nearest football team to us in Cricklewood & just as famous as today. We also became very keen on Greyhound Racing, & made many trips to Wembley to see them run. Maisie also came sometimes, but we had a bad run, losing more times than winning, so eventually, we gave it up. I should mention that we were not the only ones to lose money at the dogs. We use to go with the Jarero Family & Enrique seemed to have more luck than us.

Summer came & my recollection of Margate came on the scene, Martin, Maisie & Tony, booked two weeks holiday there. It was a very popular place to go for Londoners, they became friendly with another couple from where they stayed, so they all spent most of the day on the beach. There are a few photos of them all together, one in particular is the one with Maisie & Tony on the pier. I followed them to Margate, staying in a different boarding-house, it was a nice break with lots of sun. I even remember at lunchtime going for cheese rolls, bringing them back to the beach. The next event was Christmas, a very good time was had by all, but I have to explain that the flat in Anson Rd, was very full. Pauline & I were still there plus Fred & Ann (Maisie's cousin), were invited for a few days, (Christmas in those days were only two days), Pat (Ann's daughter) had not been born, as yet. I'm a little confused about Pat as there are photos of Pat, but don't know when. Anyway, if you remember Fred, you'll remember he was fun to have around. We were also more affluent then, especially with the drink, apart from the beer, Taragona wine & Advocat were very popular. We had a good time this Christmas. Martin was very fond of Fred & got on well together. Those were happy days for Martin & Maisie, I always looked up to them, as the junior. Martin gave me a lust for someone to look after me as I was so young, compared to him.

I must explain the situation in Anson Rd, at the time. The house belonged to the "Spiv" who controlled the property by letting out fully furnished flats, ground & first floor, which were occupied by two different families.

1946.

The rent was quite high, having only one bathroom & one toilet for the whole house, & the landlord was going to increase the rent. Martin & Maisie were to learn that the house was suddenly sold to a very religious Jewish family, the father had said that he had recently been a rabbi. The family consisted of an older lady, with three mature daughters. The family were surprised to learn that they couldn't increase the rent (which was the first move), because Maisie had previously had been "battering" the Council Offices in Kilburn, to grant "rent control" of the flat. This was a reduction of

1s-6d, & could not be subsequently increased, by law. This was a big shock to them, as they weren't flush with money.

Eventually, things became more friendly with the new Landlords & Martin & I decided to help them out with odd jobs by volunteering to paint the stairs. This was a big job which took ages to finish. We bought a few tools & to this day, I can't remember why we bought a big saw & is the only tool, still left, perhaps it was to saw firewood. The wood was to supplement coal, which was very expensive & was difficult to purchase.

So the year started with Martin doing this very heavy job involved with furnaces (a Foundry) That I couldn't understand, but he seemed to be happy working with his mate Henry (from Valencia), him & his wife, Maude used to come visiting, they were good company. You might wonder about Grandad Felipe at this stage, having crossed into Catalonia, continuing the fight against Franco. He had to cross back into France, when WW11 started, & the defeated Spanish Army were held in atrocious conditions, by the French. I will always remember him telling me how they were treated in France & the options they were giving us. Fight against the Germans or return to Spain, his reply was, they didn't help when we needed it, deciding to continue as a POW in a Concentration Camp, in Spain. He was aware that Grandma (Victoria) had died & my sister & Angel had been sent back to Spain. It was nearly three years before his release. Pauline at this time was a little restless.

The American & Canadian soldiers had departed to their own countries (not that she was doing anything wrong) & life was becoming more normal & serious, so she left us & went to live with a girlfriend & soon after, Johnny was on the scene & eventually, they married.

The summer months seemed to pass very quickly. Martin & Maisie enjoyed being parents to Tony, going to the park, visiting friends & Saturday afternoons, shopping in Kilburn. The High Street was always full of Barrow Boys & Hyde Park was a popular spot on Sundays, especially in the summer.

With winter approaching, the bad weather started early & the problem of keeping warm, was difficult. Coal was scarce & the Miners couldn't produce enough. The lack of coal plus the freezing weather on the roads, deliveries to households was a problem, this added to the "Black Market" & meant we had no fire in the flat & Martin was very concerned about young Tony. One incident that nearly came to blows when we saw a lorry delivering coal to some flats nearby, when we enquired about our order, we got a very negative response & Martin accused them of operating "The Black Market" meaning they were making money by delivering to special customers. The next thing was, Maisie & I having a difficult time trying to separate them. The next day we decided to go to the Railway Yard in Willesden Green with Tony's pushchair to demand a bag of coal (we had heard a consignment had arrived at the yard), after a lot of argument & a lot of pushing on our part, we departed with a big bag of coal in Tony's pushchair, one pushing & the other making sure it didn't fall out. It was a very bad winter, but it was going to get worse. I don't remember Christmas that year, as events came with little understanding of what was happening. Martin went into hospital, not knowing why, so Maisie would visit in the daytime & I in the evening. Martin didn't seem to be in pain, this seemed to go on for ages, until the fatal call, in the middle of the night, in February. We were told by two Policemen to go to Central Middlesex Hospital, only to learn the horror that awaited us.

I forgot to mention that the Hovshas, downstairs, were very good to Maisie, & looked after Tony whilst Martin was in hospital (Central Middlesex Hospital).

Martin died 18th February 1948 (beaten by TB of the spine & Pleurisy).

Gallery.



*Regatta on the
Nervion 1926.*



*Estatua de
Victor Chavarri.*



La playa de Portugalete.



Fiestas de Portugalete.



Puente Colgante



The River Taxi.



Condor Legion.



Nazi Propoganda.



Russian Chato.



A Notice.



La Habana.



ID Pass.



*HMS Hood. Escorted
The Habana, to Southampton.*



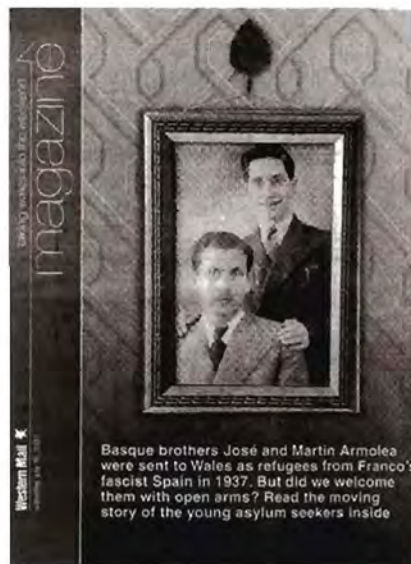
Stoneham Camp.



Stoneham.



The Plaque.



The Brechfa Story.



Forest Arms Hotel, Brechfa.



The River, Brechfa.



Christmas at Laleham (1939).



The Dance Troupe

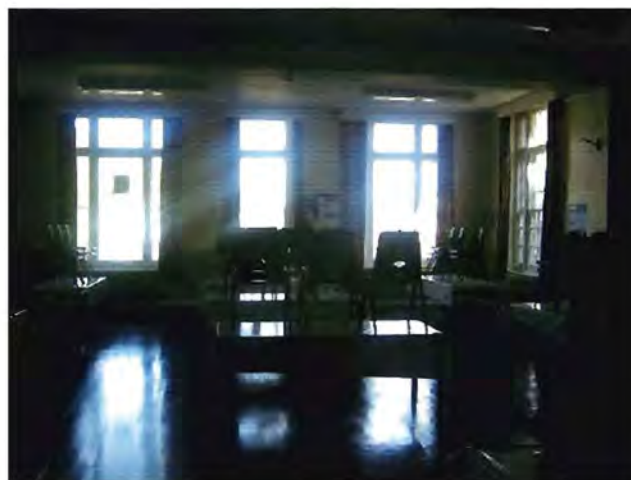
From Laleham.



Laleham (Aerial view).



Laleham Frontage.



Laleham Dining Room,



Margate Hospital.



Laleham Front View.



Laleham Revisited 2011.



Athletics At Rowley Lodge.



Atfternoon at Rowley Lodge.



Rowley Lodge (now).



At p;ay.



*Dad with the Basque Flag at the 75th Anniversary Lunch,
Southampton University.*



Anson Road, Cricklewood.



Central Middlesex Hospital.