

**By Jo McCormick**

*Madrid Resident*

I feel obligated, because of my respect for activity personnel, to tell you that many of the situations I relate in these narratives probably cannot happen anymore. Why, you say? Emergent government regulations! Imagine that—a government that regulates all aspects of our lives—birth to death. Thanks be to God we can regulate what happens to us thereafter.

Early on in my activity career we used the regulation called common sense, which seemed to work. In fact, we had the opportunity to really spend some quality time with the residents instead of trying to follow the heart and hand binding regulations imposed by many who likely have no concept of what a nursing home can and should be.

Home is the operative word here; a place where residents can feel comfortable and secure and those working for them can show respect and have meaningful relationships with them. Okay, got that out of my system—on to more fun stuff!

We had six to eight people who gathered regularly in the activity room to pursue activities we provided or a personal project they may have had.

There were several potato peelers who peeled a five-gallon bucketful two or three days a week for the dietary department. Covered with cold water they were carted back to the kitchen from whence they had come.

Others enjoyed folding laundry, personal or towels and washcloths fresh from the dryers.

During one of these sessions Maria, a little short Mexican lady who could understand but not speak English, wanted to prepare some of her special salsa for herself and her husband José (also a resident.) Her son and daughter-in-law brought all the raw ingredients and I brought my blender from home. Her family assured me she would not need much help and she did not.

I thought the concoction looked fairly harmless so I removed the plastic plug from the blender lid to savor the aroma. I quickly pulled away, coughing, gasping, choking, eyes watering profusely. I'm sure I may have used at least a couple of unacceptable expletives and Maria was laughing hysterically—along with all the others in the activity room at that time. She poured her product into pint jars and we canned them.

She and her husband always had some available to them for breakfast, dinner and supper. Me—I had my fill without it ever touching my tongue. My nose had told me it was HOT!! I'm sure to Maria and José it gave some pizzazz to bland Gringo fare.

Until we meet again here on the printed page---Jo