

A Man of Honor

On July 5, 1988, another great witness to the Garabandal events, Juan Alvarez Seco of Barcelona, passed away. He had been "el brigada" (Sergeant-major) of the Civil Guard assigned to maintain order in Garabandal during the time of the apparitions and had seen a great number of ecstasies.

In 1966, after his retirement, he was interviewed by Juan Poch Soler of the Barcelona periodical "Por Que" and was described by his interviewer in these terms: "[Juan Seco] retains his personality; that of manliness with that unmistakable stamp of earnestness that is so characteristic of the men of the Civil Guard. He speaks serenely with moments that appear intensely emotional, which is no less than the impact that the events of Garabandal he witnessed have had on his interior life."

The interview follows.

Q. When did you first go to Garabandal?

A. About six years ago in April, 1961. I was assigned to Puentenansa, province of Santander, as Sergeant-Major of the Civil Guard there.

Q. When did you learn of the events of Garabandal?

A. It was in June of the same year and I must confess that it was my greatest joy all the time I was stationed there. I was notified that in the area of my jurisdiction, an angel had appeared to four girls.

Q. Did you take it as a joke in the beginning?

A. Absolutely. After I had been informed of it, I decided one day to go up to the village [Garabandal]. When I took the road from Cosio [that leads up to Garabandal], it reminded me of one of those crib scenes they have in Cataluña at Christmastime.

Q. Do you remember the first ecstasy when the girls said the Virgin of Carmel appeared to them?



The late Juan Alvarez Seco in 1978 when he gave his testimony at the First International Congress on Garabandal held in Lourdes, France.

A. Yes sir, as if it had just happened! The four girls were rigid, somewhat tearful without batting an eyelid and without feeling any irritation from the many doctors who were there eagerly trying to perform tests on them. It was all to no avail because the girls [in ecstasy] were oblivious to whatever was around them. Then, becoming more calm and with a more joyful expression on their faces, they prayed to the Virgin for their countrymen and for the Civil Guard who protect them.

Q. How many ecstasies did you witness?

A. It's difficult to be precise, but I can tell you it was more than 1,000 because during 1961 the apparitions were almost daily and at all hours of

the day or night. Besides, many times each child had separate ecstasies.

Q. How did the guards under your command react to those events?

A. With the utmost respect. When the girls said that they were about to see the apparition and would fall into ecstasy, I myself would always take off my hat. The other guards also would take off their "tricornios" (three-cornered hats).

Q. What unusual events do you remember?

A. One day in San Vicente de la Barquera with another companion, Sergeant-Major Expósito, I entered a cafeteria and saw on the wall several calendars of very immoral figures. In the middle of these calendars was an image of Our Lady of Fatima. I asked the proprietor if I could have it, but instead of giving me the one I asked for, he gave me one of St. Michael. Afterwards, he gave me the one of Our Lady of Fatima.

Later in Garabandal, while Mari Loli was in ecstasy, I gave the image [of Our Lady of Fatima] to her companion, Jacinta, who was in the normal state so that she in turn could give it to Mari Loli for the Virgin to kiss. The girl complied with my request and when Mari Loli returned the image, already kissed by the Virgin, Jacinta asked her, "Who is on this image?" Mari Loli responded, "I don't know." "Then ask the Virgin," said Jacinta.

This was done by Mari Loli and a few seconds later she responded, "The Lady says that on this image is Our Lady of Fatima." *

You cannot imagine the emotion I felt at that moment. Today, the pic-

*It should be noted that this entire incident, including the dialogue, happened while Mari Loli was in ecstasy. Although oblivious to everyone else, a visionary in ecstasy could communicate with another visionary even if the other one were in the normal state.

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This 1962 group photo taken in Garabandal includes "el Brigada" Juan Seco, and the four visionaries in front from left: Mari Cruz, Mari Loli, Jacinta and Conchita.

ture is in the hands of Mrs. Julia de Costa and a little blind boy.

Q. When was the last time you were in Garabandal?

A. In 1965 when you were also there and I introduced you to Mari Cruz.

Q. What other emotion-filled occurrences do you remember?

A. We could fill the newspaper if you were to enumerate them all. Look, in 1961, Conchita was taken to Santander so that she would forget all about Garabandal; they thought she was sick. On one of the days she was there, the other three girls who remained in Garabandal were going to have an apparition. I gave orders for two guards to go up to the village* and take careful note of anything that might happen. The guards informed me that at 3:00 P.M., the children had entered into ecstasy and said to St. Michael the Archangel, "Conchita will not be able to see the Virgin today because they have taken her to Santander." And it seems that St. Michael told them not to worry because Conchita would see the Virgin at the same hour that they would.

The truth of the matter is that on the following day, my fellow guardsman, a Sergeant-Major from Santander, called me by phone to ask me what had happened in Garabandal the day before. When I told him of the ecstasy of the three girls, he said, "You don't have to tell me anything more. At the same hour here in Santander, Conchita also entered into ecstasy."

Q. Had some of those trances of the girls impressed you more than others?

A. Most impressive was the day when I was in the kitchen of Conchita's house with Dr. Ortiz of Santander and some priests. Conchita fell

*Puentenansa, where the Civil Guardsmen lived, is about five miles down the mountain from Garabandal, not too long a journey for them by horseback.



into ecstasy and when she tried to hold up a medal so the Virgin could kiss it, she couldn't reach Our Lady's lips. Jacinta, not in ecstasy, was there observing everything and Conchita kept saying to her, "Jump up because I can't reach."

Then we men grabbed hold of Conchita and with all our strength endeavored to lift her up, but it was useless. We couldn't even move her off the floor. It felt like she weighed thousands of kilos. However, Jacinta came close to her and with her limited strength and without help from anyone, successfully lifted up Conchita. That left me perplexed.

Then there was something else that I will never forget as long as I live. I saw how the girl was suspended in mid-air without anyone supporting her and without her having any point of support beneath her!

Q. One last question. If you feel that you can't answer it, then don't. Do you sincerely believe that the Virgin appeared in Garabandal?

A. I am certain of it. Let me relate

another incident. A lady from Barcelona, Mrs. Paquita Olivella de Subieta, sent her sister's wedding ring to Garabandal so that Conchita could have it kissed by the Virgin. The woman knew that I would be returning to Barcelona for my vacation and would be able to personally return the ring to her.

Well, one day Conchita was in ecstasy and there were several gold wedding rings on the table. She took one of them,* came over to me and while handing it to me said, "Take this ring that has to go to Barcelona."

I have every assurance that the girls are not playing—on the contrary, they pray for us and make great sacrifices.

All Garabandalists are asked to remember in their prayers the repose of the soul of Juan Alvarez Seco, a man of integrity who always forthrightly proclaimed his firm belief in the truth of the Garabandal apparitions. □

*Conchita's eyes were facing upward the whole time making it impossible for her to differentiate one ring from another.

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