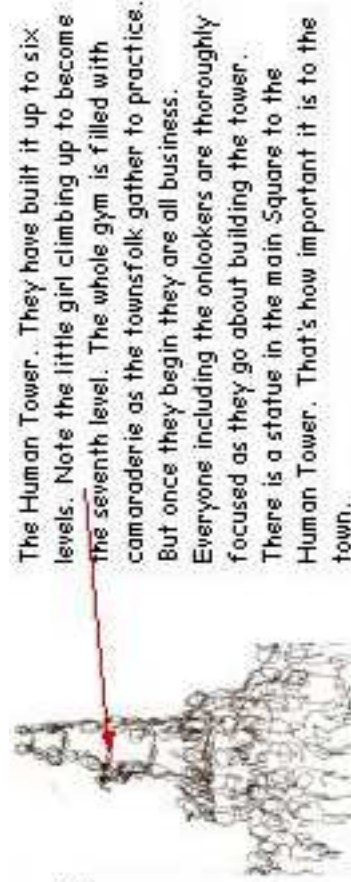


THE CONFERENCE IN VILAFRANCA



The Human Tower. They have built it up to six levels. Note the little girl climbing up to become the seventh level. The whole gym is filled with camaraderie as the townsfolk gather to practice. But once they begin they are all business. Everyone including the onlookers are thoroughly focused as they go about building the tower. There is a statue in the main Square to the Human Tower. That's how important it is to the town.

That night they had dinner at the Cal Figarot, which is where the "Castellers of Vilafranca" practice. The Castellers literally build human towers. There are about 65 teams all over Catalan that compete every year. Vilafranca has one of the most celebrated ones. While we watched they practiced up to 6 tiers. They can go up to 10. It was explained to us that this was a community activity involving 1,000 townspeople including young and old, men and women. It was quite a sight to see everyone arriving to rehearse. They do this twice a week during the year and 4 times as the time gets closer to the competition. It is a very well planned and carefully executed event. At the base are around 800 persons. A very detailed diagram shows each persons place all the way to the young girl at the top. A director stands at the bottom coordinating every move and yelling out precise instructions. Timing is essential and as the tower gets higher it literally sways. It is very exciting to watch.



The Town Square in front of the Church. The Vilafranca Museum is on the left and the Human Tower Statue is on the right in the middle of the Square.

On the right is the patio in the Vilafranca Museum.

On Saturday while those participants still left went off to explore the Costa Brava Bret stayed in Vilafranca with the young student from City As School. They walked through the weekly open markets and were joined by another young Spanish student for lunch. Bret had his last dinner with some colleagues from the conference. The next day up bright and early and a smooth trip home.

A view from Bret's room in the Dom Hotel in Vilafranca looking west.



The famed Montserrat Mountain which stands out because of its jagged and sharp peaks. It is just outside of Barcelona on the way to Vilafranca. It is a stunning sight to see.

The Conference was a very positive experience and the format was a good learning exercise for the participants. It was made even better by the warmth and cordiality of our hosts Josep Alsina, Mercè Marce and Silvia Caldu. Now we look forward to Greece and the Annual INEPS Congress in May. We hope you enjoyed this very informal remembrance of the conference.