

# BEHIND THE DESK



by Delores Lado  
 It is difficult for me to write about Spain, mainly because there are so many things I would like to say. Another problem is my being a native of the country and having spent most of my adult years abroad. The image of Spain as I left it, when I came

to attend graduate school in this country is engraved in my mind and in some ways, more real to me than the Spain I saw later on my return trips. However, enough years have separated me from my native land to let me appreciate not only the newest of many customs but also the peculiar customs of Spain.

The first impression after leaving the air terminal of Barajas heading for Madrid is that the traffic is crazy. Instead of one car per lane, making it four on each direction, there are usually five ragged lines of traffic going each way. Each car or taxi is always trying to pass its neighbors, happily ignoring every traffic law. I think that it is characteristic of Spaniards' penchant for ignoring rules Spanish society moves, in some ways by unbreakable laws, many of which are almost as old as the nation itself, but these laws seldom come from the government. They are ingrained mostly in the family and social tradition.

The second impression is that the cities are very noisy, in part due to the great density of population. But I have traveled in many other European countries of Western Europe and Spain is undoubtedly the noisiest. Compared to Madrid, downtown Manhattan is a heaven of quietness. There are always people in the streets of the cities, crowds of people shopping, walking, on

their way to jobs and occupations, strolling, sitting on the sidewalk cafe, having an aperitivo or coffee before lunch, in mid-afternoon, before supper and, in summer, after supper and before and after going to the movies or the theater. Spaniards spend a lot of time on the street and their forms of dress are oriented towards the outside activity. You have to look nice when you go out not because you are necessarily going anywhere special, just because you go to the street.

The pace of life in Spain is very leisurely, especially compared to that in the United States. Spaniards have a very different ethic from that of the Puritans. Living in what is for the most part a harsh and poor land, they have learned that life is not "a bowl of cherries" but that the earth is "a valley of tears." The impact of Catholicism in the Spanish psyche has taught people the impermanency of life and the importance of death. Some foreigners had commented about the Spanish obsession with death and even the glorification of death, as the fate to a happy future. Well, religion told us so and a history bloodied with fratricidal wars did not help. The reaction of the Spaniards to this state of affairs is to take it easy and enjoy life as much as possible. Spaniards, in general, make bad capitalists. They are not interested in making loads of money if it interferes too much with the pleasures of vacation, friendships and family life. That does not mean they do not work hard, they do. Obtaining a good living, in some cases a decent living is, very often, hard enough. But the money one makes one uses in living

better and having more fun, instead of investing it to make more money.

I think that being a teenager is infinitely more fun in Spain because it is much easier to meet other people of the same age informally, in cafes or on the streets of the small cities at certain congregation points which become popular, one never knows for what reasons. The teenagers are much more integrated into the normal run of things than in this country.

Finally, another feature that makes Spain especially interesting is that it is not really a country but several countries living, not always peacefully, together. Traveling from one region to another one finds not only the change in landscape and speech similar to those we find in this country, but totally different architecture, customs and language. There are four independent languages in Spain: the Castilian, usually referred to as Spanish, the official and most widespread language; Catalan, closer to French than to Spanish; Gallego, from which Portuguese originated; and Basque, unrelated to any other language. These languages are still used in both speaking and writing and the different peoples are fiercely independent and proud of their cultural traditions. At the moment, each of them have their own government and constitution.

So, as the guide books say, Spain is indeed a land of contrasts, where the Celtic pipes of Galicia combine with the elegant beauty of the Mediterranean cities and Moorish remains of the Arab Spain of years past in Andalusia. Spain is a bridge between Africa and Europe, and quite unique in its way.



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 The Cold Cuts have four new members. Brenda Dixon will be playing the hat rack, Laura Edwards will be on the bongos, Jackie Mitchell will play the sand blocks and Gigi Wallace will play the mops.

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 Congratulations to Millice Rogers, new SGA President, and Mary Duke Sanders, J-Board Chairman.

**BEACON WALKS**  
 The Beacon has five new members: Michele Arthur, Anne Gaddy, Allison Sprock, Sarah Woltz and Mrs. Deborah Shelley.

## Solution

