

Police Lieutenant



Name: **A.J. Bellido de Luna**
Profession: **Police Lieutenant**
Number of years in this line of work: **19**
Native Language: **English, Spanish**
Other Language(s): **Arabic**

1) What languages do you know? How did you learn them? (At home, At school, etc.)

My parents came to the US in 1962 from Cuba and so they spoke Spanish but they were forced to speak English because they wanted us to learn English. There is a lot of bigotry because of race, so my parents would speak to us in Spanish and we would respond in English. My grandmother came from Cuba and taught me how to speak, read and write in Spanish.

2) What is your profession?

I am a police lieutenant.

3) Describe a "typical" day as a police. How do you use your languages in your work?

As a police lieutenant I command about 70 employees and manage a division of the police department in the community and are involved in dances and events.

4) What do you enjoy about it?

I like the opportunity to help people.

5) What language do you think in?

That's a great question. People sometimes don't understand when I say that I think in Spanish and they translate into English.

6) What opportunities have knowing another language provided you that you wouldn't have otherwise?

There are many advantages. I can interact with groups of people that I wouldn't be able to interact with otherwise. People are envious of people who can speak another language, especially Spanish. My mother has been in this country for over 40 years and she has taken many classes. When I graduated from law school I had a few minutes before the ceremony and my mother was eating something to eat. I heard the clerk behind the counter say to her "Why don't you let your 10 year old kid tell her she couldn't speak English."

I've traveled to Israel, South America, Canada and Asia. It's amazing how many people in Paris with my future wife and we couldn't get a hotel because the Tour de France was in French and the man at the hotel couldn't understand her. Finally I spoke to him and got a hotel room there right away. If I didn't know Spanish I might not have gotten a room.

7) If you had the time to learn another language now, what language would you like to learn?

Can I give more than one language? I would like to learn Arabic and French. I know Arabic but not that I could teach at a university but enough to get by. I would like to learn French.

8) What do you think you would be doing if you weren't a police lieutenant?

I would be a lawyer, well actually I am a lawyer, since I went to law school, but I would like to be a lawyer.

9) What advice would you give to somebody who wants to be a police lieutenant? What languages should they learn?

Learning another language is important, education is important. People don't realize that police agencies are more selective, because they can afford to be more selective than larger agencies. A college degree is extremely important. I didn't grow up wishing to be a police officer, I wanted to do until much later in life. I think that it is a very admirable profession.

Any language is helpful to be a police officer but Spanish is very useful. There are people who speak German, Russian, and Cantonese. We maintain a list of names of officers who speak other languages we need to.

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