

Designer started on dolls' clothes

MALLEN (AP) — As a child in the Rio Grande Valley, Ruben Torres was a dangerous factor for his mother's wardrobe. He would sometimes tear up her dresses to create new outfits for his sister's dolls.

It was good practice for an adult career that would see him jolt the fashion world in 1964 with creation of the "monokini," the European version of the topless women's bathing suit.

"You know a boy drawing women's clothing at 10, which is when I started drawing — in other words I was a natural designer — they would call him a sissy," said Torres. "There was no understanding of course, especially here (South Texas), so I had to break out of here."

Torres' break eventually took him to Paris, where he now heads design for Lacoste International, the company that puts its trademark crocodile on its clothing and accessories. "I'm the one who made the image of Lacoste," said Torres, who has worked for the company since 1970. "I'm the Ralph Lauren of Lacoste."

Torres, 56, commutes between homes in Edinburg in the Rio Grande Valley; Paris, France; and Mexico City. He has spent extra time in the Valley lately preparing for the McAllen International Museum's Sept. 3 opening of "Erte and His Contemporaries," an exhibit taken from Torres' collection of Parisian theater art, including art deco posters, costume renderings and stage designs from 1918-40.

Torres believes his 1000-piece collection may be the largest of its type in the world.

Erte, the best known of the designers featured in the exhibit, gained renown during 20 years as an illustrator for Harper's Bazaar.

Torres, who saved many of the esoterically and historically important pieces from Parisian trash cans, was born in the Valley city of Mercedes and grew up 20 miles to the west in McAllen. He joined the Army in 1951 after graduating from Southern Methodist University in Dallas with a degree in costume design, and

credits a stint in Korea with influencing his design with Oriental ideas.

He returned, determined to work in Paris, but did not know how.

"The French at the time didn't think that Americans had any creative talent... You wouldn't even get in the door," Torres said.

So he re-did his portfolio with a Mexican look, posed as a Mexican designer and landed a job as an apprentice in Paris for over a year, about the time limit then for foreign apprentices in France. The French experience was enough to land him a top design job in New York when he returned.

He returned to Paris in 1960 designing fashions for Nina Ricci. While creating beautiful clothes for rich women, he said he was disturbed by his own near obsession with women's breasts.

"What was coming out in my design work were topless dresses," Torres said.

He had the workers start making the dresses to see what they looked like on the company's models. The confused models sometimes would put them on backwards, he said.

"All right, so already these were the first models that had to be in front of a man with their bosoms free," Torres said.

He decided he had to leave Nina Ricci and its emphasis on wealthy, middle-aged women, because he envisioned "women without tops, without brassieres, without swim tops."

"In 1964, I decided to leave Nina Ricci, because this was killing me," although, he said, he did not know who would accept such provocative ideas.

He went back to New York, where Women's Wear Daily gave him six pages to show his topless fashions.

Two days later, Austrian-born American designer Rudi Gernreich in New York came out with the "topless bathing suit."

Torres said he does not think his friend Gernreich had enough time to copy his designs that appeared in Women's Wear Daily, but that the two came out with the same idea by coincidence.

Torres rushed to Paris and released his own topless version for Europe, which the European press dubbed the "monokini," a variation of "bikini." It earned him denunciations from the Vatican and the Soviets, but topless bathing has since gained acceptance on many European beaches.

"I'm a provocative designer because what I propose is always a little bit strong," Torres said.

Bush pays respects at funeral for Daniel

AUSTIN (AP) — Vice President George Bush and his wife joined approximately 400 people Sunday in paying their respects to former governor and U.S. senator Price Daniel.

Daniel died Thursday of a stroke at his ranch near Liberty. He was 77. Bush, who flew from Houston with his wife Barbara, said Daniel had served in the Senate with Bush's father, Prescott, many years ago.

Daniel, a Democrat, was in the Senate in the 1950s, leaving before his first term ended to run for governor.

"I admired this man like all Texans, and we just wanted to fly over and pay our respects, not only from this generation of Bushes but from the previous one. He's a great Texan, a great American, and we have great respect for him," Bush told reporters as he left the First Baptist Church.

After the memorial service, Bush and his wife kissed Daniel's wife, Jean, and shook hands with members of the Daniel family inside the church.

A reporter asked Bush if attending the service also gave him a chance to meet conservative Democrats, and the Republican presi-

After the monokini episode, Torres, long an opponent of the necktie, decided to overhaul men's clothing, which he said has not advanced since the late 19th Century.

In 1970, Bernard Lacoste asked Torres to develop an image for the company and its knit polo shirts in 12 colors.

"I am a very successful designer because what I design can perhaps sell enormously," Torres said.

dential candidate replied, "I don't think so — we're not very good at that. I think it was more to pay our respects to the family of Price Daniel."

Three ministers, including Daniel's son-in-law David Murph of Richardson, took part in the 23-minute service.

The Rev. Browning Ware, pastor at First Baptist, said, "Price Daniel loved Texas, and we join him in that affection."

Ware told the story of a 19th century preacher in Texas who said of a friend, "This man had a home in almost every community and in the house of every good man in Texas."

"This is true of Price Daniel," Ware said.

Daniel was said to have held more elected jobs in Texas than anyone else, including posts in the executive, legislative and judicial branches as a state House member, attorney general and Supreme Court justice.

He retired in 1979 after eight years on the court.

Daniel was buried on his ranch next to his son, Price Jr., a former Texas House speaker who was shot to death in 1981.

Professor tests toxic secretions

ARLINGTON (AP) — Some people receive sterling sums to sniff-test perfumes or cheeses or wines in the civility of a spotless laboratory.

Then there's Dr. Edmund Brodie out in the field, tasting toad toxins.

Much of the University of Texas-Arlington biology chairman's research concerns predator-prey relationships. "When one studies anti-predator secretions it's important to know or have some understanding of what you're dealing with," he said.

There's really only one way to do that.

Taste the secretion.

"If it burns the lining, then you can at least have a starting point in research where you can hypothesize it would burn the mouth of the predator."

Sounds disgusting.

"As disgusting as it sounds," he said, "it's important that that be done."

Any guy nervy enough to put tongue to salamander fluids deserves a certain fame, and Brodie's is worldwide. He was featured in Omni magazine in April, and the British Broadcasting Corp. recently sought his advice on the Appalachian salamander for a nature program.

"He's a great colleague to work with," said Jonathan Campbell, a biology associate professor who has accompanied Brodie on several field trips. "He is one of the most famous scientists in the world on how certain prey interact with predators."

Indeed, Brodie has written more than 100 papers and four books, but if a professor had not pointed his interest toward science as an undergraduate, he might be teaching a backfield today instead of future biologists.

He had planned to coach high

school football, and he received his bachelor's degree in secondary education. Then he took a biology course as a junior at Oregon College of Education.

"It's the same old story for most people who are professors," he said. "They went into that line of work because a professor turned them on to that line of study."

The meeting led to a teaching-research career that has spanned the continents. One-of-a-kind masks and colorful handwoven rugs, collected on trips to Guatemala and Africa, cover the walls and cabinets of Brodie's office.

"My hobby is doing research. I've only bought masks when I was in some country collecting amphibians and there were masks. As much time as possible I spend in the field. If I get the chance to get in the field and collect and work with amphibians, primarily salamanders, that I haven't worked with before... I'm gone."

It has been a career of influence, and one student Brodie influenced now teaches here.

Daniel Formanowicz, biology associate professor, worked toward his master's degree at Adelphi University in New York while Brodie taught there.

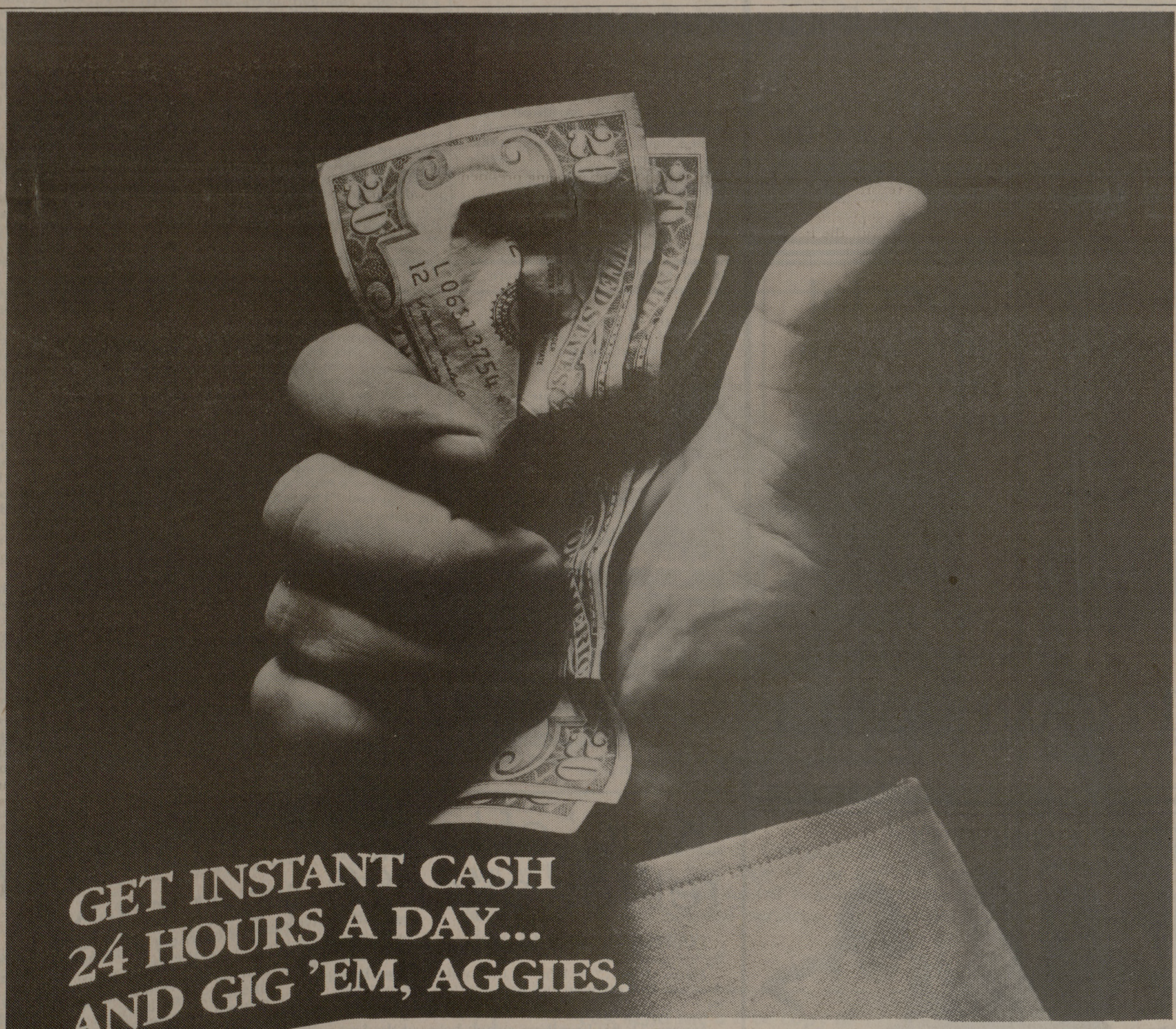
Formanowicz and Brodie once took a group of students to the Catskill Mountains on a field trip.

The second day out it began to snow. Two inches an hour.

The students got restless.

"We didn't know what to do with them," Formanowicz recalled. "We were sitting around that night in front of the fireplace and we got to talking about snipe."

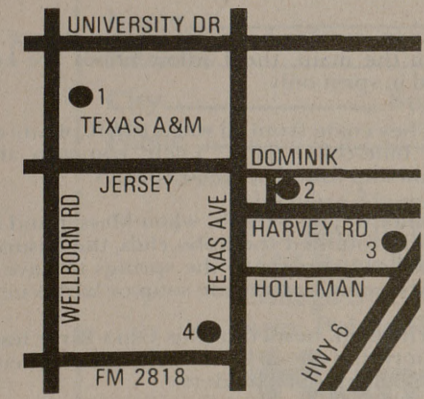
A snipe is a small bird with a long pointy beak. It inhabits temperate regions.



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