

TEACHING IN EUROPE

'Interest in the law'

Attorney notes Czech students' enthusiasm

By MIKE HERRERA IV
LAREDO MORNING TIMES



LOPEZ

For retired lawyer Rufino E. Lopez Jr., the law is a powerful thing. Having recently returned from his second stint at lecturing in Eastern Europe, he's seen

hundreds of young people willing to devote their lives to it.

"There's such an interest in the law over there," said Lopez, whose 45-year legal career includes insurance and construction law. He spent two weeks as a visiting professor at Palasky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, where he taught a course on American jurisprudence. This opportunity came about from his membership in the Center for International Legal Studies, which Lopez describes as a sort of Peace Corps for lawyers.

"It attracts a lot of older, retired lawyers," he said. "We contribute our time, knowledge — and our money really — to spread information about the American legal system."

Besides sponsoring legal pub-

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Maldonado said. "It's a new era in higher education.

"There's going to be much more accountability, much more transparency, much more demanding."

But like the rising academic standards facing school districts in Texas, colleges would have to boost student success during a time of cutbacks. However, cutbacks aren't anything new for Texas community colleges, which have experienced reduced funding from the state for a number of years.

In effect, LCC and other colleges have had to rely more on revenue from stu-

dent tuition and fees and property taxes.

Meanwhile, LCC Board President Cynthia Mares said the college's trustees have asked administration for updates on the student success initiatives several times a year.

"When it comes to the end of the day, are we being effective and efficient in turning out well-rounded students who are work-force-ready or ready to pursue a four-year degree," she said. "That's very important."

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lications, the non-profit Center hosts conferences and symposia on issues of international legal practice in regions like the Middle East, South America, and parts of Africa. Both Lopez's teaching ventures have been in Eastern Europe: he spent three months in the Ukraine last spring in addition to his recent Czech Republic trip. He enjoys these sojourns, he said, for many reasons, not the least of which is the caliber and interest of the students.

"These students are very learned. They are very fluent in English as well as many other languages such as Russian, French, German," he said of his Czech students. "They want to take this course as an elective, and they just bring so much willingness to learn."

Lopez added that the students dress formally for

class and take their education very seriously.

"They never miss."

Though a few came from other academic disciplines, the majority of the students were among the 4,000-member law school at Palasky. Because they are accustomed to a dominant federal legal system, they are always surprised by America's different state laws.

"They don't understand why we have different laws in different states, and why a lawyer in one state can't just readily practice in another," added Lopez. "It boggles their minds."

However, what struck Lopez most about the youth of this formerly communist country was their eagerness to utilize their education in a capitalistic economy.

"How do I make money? That was the biggest question they asked," he said.

"These are new capitalist countries. They're learning to work. They're learning about private enterprise. Back home, I was used to seeing all these young lawyers who just want to work for the government. Among the (Czech) students, very few have a desire to be public servants. They want to be in the private business world."

Besides adding some adventure to his retirement, the teaching experience in the Czech Republic left Lopez feeling that America has a partner in Eastern Europe.

"I don't know if we'll ever make inroads in other parts of the world, but in the Czech Republic they love Americans. And they think Texans hung the moon."

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Disney

By MARTIN GRIFFITH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

RENO, Nev. — An original, autographed drawing by Walt Disney, believed to have been made about 1920 before he hit it big in the entertainment world, will go up for auction in Reno this week.

The whimsical drawing of a cigar-chomping man wearing a derby hat will be among 1,400 items up for sale at the two-day auction set to begin Tuesday at the Atlantis Casino Resort.

Titled "Fill Up My Can," the illustration has an estimated value of

Lawyer teaches class in the Ukraine

By DENISE BLAZ
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Throughout his extensive 45-plus year law career, Rufino E. Lopez Jr. has tackled everything from insurance defense work to construction defects lawsuits to medical and professional malpractice.

But this past spring, Lopez took on another challenge when he took up an offer to be a visiting professor in the Ukraine at the Odessa National Academy of Law.

It was the opportunity of a lifetime, the 70-year-old history buff said, as he spoke fondly about the experience, bringing up slideshows of pictures and video of his experience at the school and while sightseeing.

He was asked to present a three-month course on American law to 47 students, and without hesitation jumped at the chance, leaving his law firm, Lopez Peterson, to teach in another country.

In June, Lopez published a book on the teachings he presented in Ukraine titled "Lecture on Litigation" — a summary of American law and procedures, European Union law, ethics and an understanding of how to draft petitions, complaints, responses and answers, both at the federal and the state level.

The book reads like a tutorial about the laws



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and a study on how the system exists today, he said.

The end of his lectures in Ukraine concluded with a mock jury trial, a commonplace American practice that is not normally used in the Eastern European country.

"It's not really seen over there," said Lopez. "It's permitted, but the judges don't like it. These students will be the new judges, a new generation."

"I learned more than the students," Lopez said about his experience. "Ukraine is so vast. I feel in love with the country."

In the coming months, Lopez also plans on taking up offers to teach in Hungary and Poland.

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