

## Meet iconic Sonoma designer Andi Valo-Espina

### Custom menswear designer specializes in suits for big men with big names

By **REBECCA WOLFF**

INDEX-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Rumor has it that former President Ronald Reagan was buried in a suit made for him by Andi Valo-Espina.

The Sonoma resident has designed custom menswear for 38 players on the 49ers, Clint Eastwood, Tom Jones, Magic Johnson, film stars, TV personalities and yes, the 40th president of the U.S.

The list goes on, though she's unable to disclose details about each one of her clients since she's signed a few nondisclosure agreements.

She sources fabric from Scotland, Italy, France and England, but what makes Andrea Custom Tailoring unique is that she works primarily with "hard to fit" men, which is why she ends up working with professional athletes.

"When you have a flare for fashion, you go into women's ware, but I thought, I'm gonna try this," Valo-Espina said. "And here I am all these years later with 950 men — eat your heart out girls!"

At just over 5 feet tall, Valo-Espina is a spark plug when it comes to managing people and her business. Her favorite part about her job is working with clients one-on-one, even when she has to stand on her stepladder to get their measurements.

She started in women's fashion with her business, San Francisco Sweater Co., where she sold her women's sweater designs to I. Magnin, a former San Francisco-based high-fashion and specialty goods department store that featured her designs in their catalogs and in their stores.

She eventually sold that company before pivoting into menswear with Andrea Custom Tailoring.

With a degree in business economics from University of Michigan, Valo-Espina is a big numbers girl. And she figured, with menswear, there was less variability, less alterations and more consistency — all of which floated her boat.

She developed a measurement method that she credits with giving her guys the perfect

**See Designer, [A8](#)**



**Andi Valo-Espina, custom tailor to hard-to-fit men and women, everyone from 7-foot-tall athletes to jockeys, on Oct. 30 in the foyer of her Sonoma home.**

ROBBI PENGELLY / INDEX-TRIBUNE

---

Designer

### **Continued from A1**

fit every time.

For each of her nearly 1,000 clients, Valo-Espina has had them come in to conduct her intake process, which includes having them fill out forms, talking about style preferences, budgets and taking exactly 36 individual and highly precise body measurements — all of which takes just 30 to 45 minutes.

She then sends off all the details to one of her U.S. production facilities, where the designs come to life.

Many of her longtime clients have stuck around for the great fit she produces, but also for her fabrics. She has a sleuth of fabric swatches to choose from, though some clients insist on having exclusive rights to certain ones.

Randy Cross, who played for the 49ers from the mid-1970s to the late '80s, was Valo-Espina's first link into the roster. She ran into him at a cocktail party and noticed what she described as the ill-filling bell bottoms he was wearing. If there's one thing she can't stand, she said, it's a poorly fitting pant.

She went up and commented on them — and Cross shared his dilemma about not being able to find regular pants that fit him right. She then offered her services.

According to Valo-Espina, he had the largest thighs her tape measure has ever come across. A few weeks later, for the first time in a long time, he had pants that fit well.

He promised to refer her to other guys on the team but only if she promised to keep some of his favorite styles exclusive to him. That wasn't the last time she heard that request.

But that was fine by her — and far from the oddest request she received over the years. When she met Tom Jones' stylist at a conference in Lake Tahoe, they mentioned that Jones needed some unique tailor work that they weren't finding access to in Los Angeles. Of course, Valo- Espina offered to help.

Jones' stylists explained that there had been wardrobe malfunctions while Jones was onstage — when he would rip open his button-down shirt in the middle of a performance, the buttons kept hitting people in the eyes. They would then try and sue Jones, she said.

Valo-Espina came up with a solution involving false buttons and Velcro that fixed the issue. So she went on to produce hundreds of those shirts, as well as unreasonably tight pants, for the Welsh singer for several years.

Though she's worked with many distinguished men — and has enjoyed every bit of it — she's stuck to her rule of never dating them out of fear of potentially losing a client.

If there's one thing that's remained true for Valo-Espina in over three decades of working in men's fashion, it's that the industry fits her perfectly.

To learn more about Valo- Espina's services, visit her website at [andreaustomtailoring.com](http://andreaustomtailoring.com).

---

[Copyright \(c\) 2023 Sonoma Index-Tribune. Copyright Notice / Privacy Policy. Edition 11/3/2023](#)  
[Powered by TECNAVIA](#)

---