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Joel Sartora/Daily Nebraskan

Barbara Eager twirls one of "the wet look" swimsuits she has made. To her right is a bulletin board full of suit patterns.

Designing in the jungle
Swimsuit business booms

By Chris Burbach
 Editorial Page Editor

Lincoln resident Barbara Eager was lounging on the beach in Mexico in a swimsuit she had designed and sewn when she caught the eye of the owners of a local boutique. They liked what they saw so much, they commissioned her to create a line for their store. So she moved there.

Eager said she lived in the jungle and designed for locals, at the same time building a reputation at the beaches. That reputation continues to bring in orders to Eager's business, Que Barbara.

Eager is back in Nebraska now, home for her — but perhaps not home sweet home.

"It's been real tough here in the Midwest," she said. Eight months a

year of nonswimming weather, the region's relative removal from the cutting edge of fashion and the conservative attitudes of Midwestern people have made it tough, Eager said.

But she's coping. She's branched out into sportswear — specifically designed sweats made to be worn anywhere — to keep her business going in the off-season, Eager said. It's working well enough to keep her and one employee working; Eager herself seven days a week, she said.

One reason things have gone so well for Eager is because her business is unique in Nebraska, she said.

"I'm it in the Midwest," she said. "I'm sitting on a gold mine."

What's so unique about Eager is she designs her suits for each individual customer — there's no buying off the rack from Que Barbara. She said cus-

tomers come in and look at samples and photographs, get measured and choose fabric for their suit. Within a week they have their suit. Each suit costs \$40, she said.

A lot of their suits reflect the swimwear philosophy that's finally reaching Nebraska — skin is in. High French cut suits are popular this year, as is Spandex, the wet look fabric, Eager said.

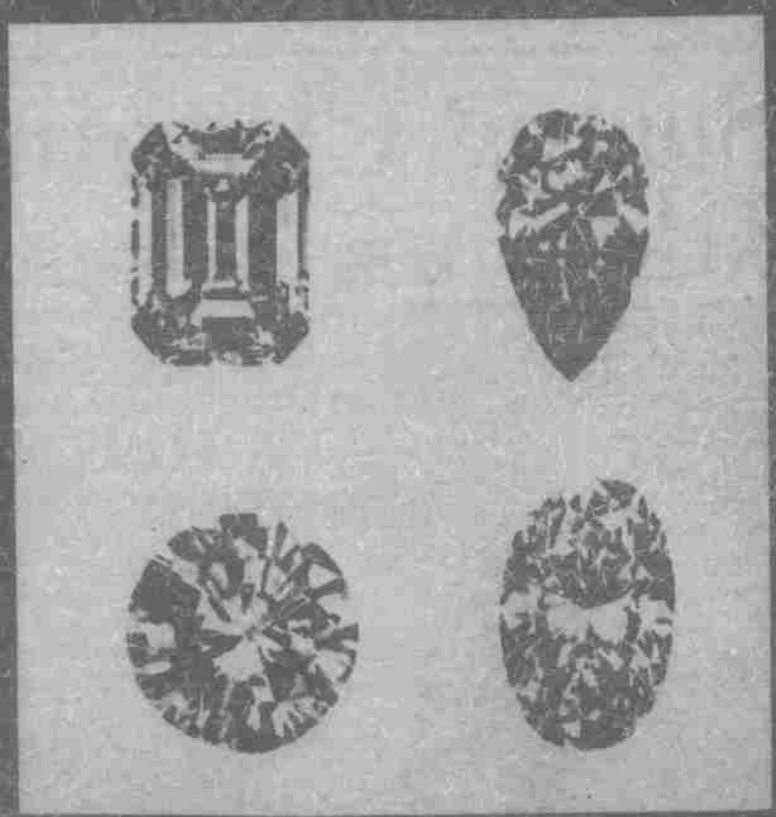
All of Que Barbara's designing, marketing, buying, sewing and selling is done out of Eager's home, she said. She does everything but some of the sewing herself.

Although her break into the commercial fashion scene is a fairly recent occurrence, Eager said she has been sewing for herself since she was 12. An art major in college, she taught herself design and everything else her business entails, she said.

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