

# Cotton, pastels and bright colors are 'in'

By JEFF BROWNE

Ernie Ganzebaum from Winnetoon has a problem. No, it's not his acne. His mom always said that would clear up when he found a girlfriend.

No, it's not girls. Betty Lou has sworn to be true. And Belinda (the girl with the harelip) has been chasing him all over Harper-Schramm-Smith.

No, Ernie's problem is his spring wardrobe. Ernie's closet is full of petroleum products — combustible clothes.

Cotton is in, Ernie. So are pastels and bright colors, baggy pants, layers and traditional-looking suits, according to Lincoln retail men's specialty shops.

"We're trying to feature fashion looks that aren't as conservative as what Lincoln buyers are used to," said Mark Rezac of Magee's The Shop. "We want to make a consumer look stop and buy."

Look, stop and buy. What's on the market? Some looks are new, some carry-over from past years. Here's a brief guide for Ernie Ganzebaum, where ever you are.

**Headgear:** Hats — only if you're driving a tractor, Ernie. Headbands — only if you're Mike Reno of Loverboy fame or similar persuasion.

**Neckwear:** Throw those chains away, Ernie. Melt 'em, hock 'em, or hand them out at the door at Stooze's.

**Shirts:** Lots of madras, which has been making a steady comeback in the last three years and is now the staple of many specialty stores.

"Madras is never out," Rezac said. Ben Simon's buyer Leilani Stohl also stocks her store with madras.

The Hitchin' Post, however, is relying on pastel pullovers.

All three stores have a variety of different shirts, ranging from traditional Oxford cloth button-

downs to referee-striped all-cottons. Whatever your tastes, all that seems to matter is that your shirts are cotton.

**Sweaters:** Cotton, if anything. "Believe it or not, cotton sweaters are starting to sell," Stohl said. "People are going on vacation and they feel they need cotton sweaters."

Rezac, however, has completely forsaken the cotton sweaters. He said Nebraska springs and summers are too hot for any sweaters at all.

"We've tried to sell cotton sweaters in the past, but they didn't move," he said.

**Shorts:** More fashion than function. Stohl said Simon's is featuring cotton in general, madras in particular. The shorts aren't much longer than last year, Stohl said, but most won't show off a lot of leg.

Rezac was especially enthusiastic about The Shop's pleated and cuffed military shorts, which he said offer a fashion alternative Magee's shoppers haven't had in the past. The Shop at Gateway will also stock corduroy shorts, a very popular item the last three years.

**Slacks:** Colors, pleats and silhouettes. Gregg Mallam of the Hitchin' Post emphasized the diversity of slacks available this spring — diversity in color, patterns, fabric and style.

"Colors depend on the individual," Mallam said. "Many lines are heavy into brighter colors, but others are sticking to earth tones."

Mallam said to look for lots of striped slacks with a generally looser fit.

Stohl of Ben Simon's added pleats and cuffs to what's in for spring slacks. Ben Simon's also features bright colors, but they haven't sold well.

"I'm baffled," Stohl said. "I just love the colors."

Rezac spoke mostly about a silhouette pant with a contoured seat and full leg that narrows at the bottom.

**Suits and Sport Coats:** Neither have much in common with the other this spring. Suits will be more traditional than they've been in the past 15 years, while sport coats are getting away from navy blue.

Don Stewart of Ben Simon's said surface-interest fabrics, rather than smooth and flat materials, will become popular in the next year.

Stewart and Mallam both emphasized the predominance of linen, silk and silk blends in this year's sport coats. Mallam is counting on plaids also being popular. He said bold stripes and plaids figure more prominently in sport coats than they have before, but Stewart downplayed their patterns' importance.

Suits range from business stripes and blues to a "touch of double-breasted," Stewart said. The look, though, is generally very traditional, he said.

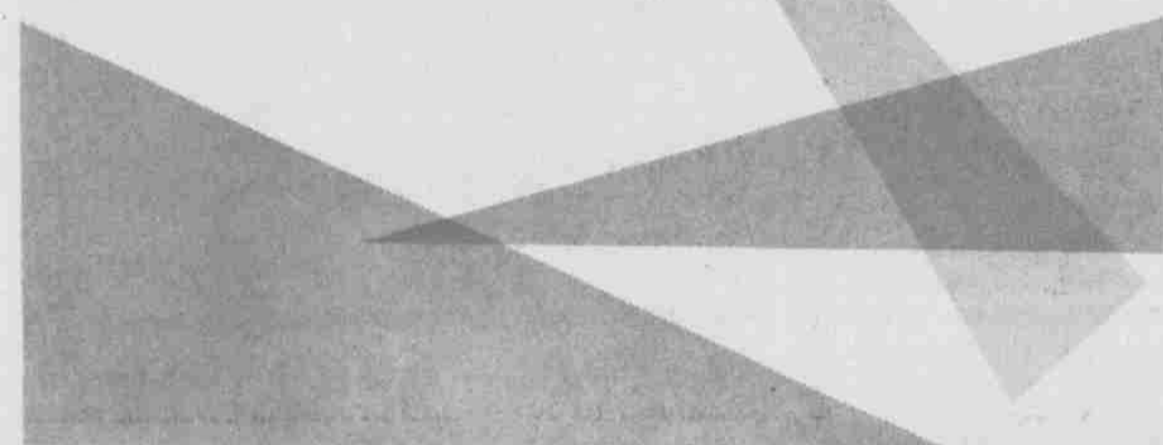
De-emphasis of the vest also highlights this year's look, Stewart said.

**Sales:** "We had a great retail season last year and we expect an even better one this year," Stohl said of Ben Simon's.

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