

Cover Story

Business expands to separate shop

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gings for motorcyclists at first. "I had a shop set up in the basement of our home at first and then when one of our children moved out I moved upstairs and in 1992 we built this," said Sellers about her shop, which is located behind the Sellers home at 507 N. Dubuque St.

In 1995 she started making and selling chaps at rodeos.

"Most of my works continues to be custom orders. I do a lot of designing and I make a lot of my own patterns - there aren't patterns for chaps," she said with a

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chuckle. "Making chaps or leggings requires six measurements - the waist, thigh, knee, calve, ankle and inseam," she explained.

While most people think sewing on leather is difficult, Sellers said it isn't any different than sewing on any other fabric - unless you have to rip a seam. "When you sew on leather the needle makes holes in the fabric so when you have to rip out stitching you have to hit the exact

same holes again when you restitch it," Sellers stated.

Also, she said sewing leather on a household machine "knocks out the timing."

To keep up with her orders, Sellers has three industrial sewing machines - two for sewing and one for patching. She also has two part-time employees but Sellers said she sews everyday.

In addition to rodeo and motorcycle attire, Sellers said she has made a variety of jackets, skirts, coats and purses. She has made outfits for dogs, as well as dressed teddy bears. She has also sewed a wedding bridesmaid dresses.

"The most unusual request I ever got was from a Marshalltown doctor who wanted me to make a stomach that he could use for teaching. He had one made out of vinyl but he wanted a leather one," she said.

"Most of my orders are word-of-mouth - somebody, knows somebody who bought something from me," stated Sellers.

The leather she uses for her garments comes from St. Louis, California, Maine and New York and is purchased by the square foot instead of by the yard. "The softer the leather is the better quality it is. Since my name goes on this stuff, I use the best leather I can get because I only want my name on the best," she said. "When people are investing in a leather garment they want the best - something that will last. To me leather looks neat and it

doesn't go out of style," Sellers added.

Sellers said she tries to fill orders within six weeks but it depends on the number of orders

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and the request.

"If they can catch me I'm open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

State Farm to repay millions

BLOOMINGTON, III. (AP) — State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co. will return \$891.6 million to its policyholders in 35 states and the District of Columbia — the second refund in seven months — as accident claims continue to fall.

The nation's largest auto insurer announced that lower claims and a slowdown in the growth of medical costs are behind the refunds, which will be paid by check or a credit to accounts upon renewal of policies.

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Sharon Sellers

Fisher lay-off leads to Sharon's Leather

By ROSE KODET
T.R.I.B. Editor

ALBION — If Sharon Sellers had been told 11 years ago that she would be a successful business owner she probably would not have believed it. But today Sellers, who owns Sharon's Leather here, is selling her rodeo and motorcycle garments nationally.

"I never dreamt it would develop into what it is now," stated Sellers.

"I have sewn all my life but not on leather until the mid-1980s.

Dave (her husband) and I both rode motorcycles at that time and I made us matching leather

"Fishers did me a big favor when they laid me off because I don't think I would have started this business otherwise"

vests," explained Sellers. "In 1986 when I got laid off at Fishers I just

wanted something to do, so I decided to start my own business. In May of 1987 I rented an industrial sewing machine and opened Sharon's Leather," she added.

"Fishers did me a big favor when they laid me off because I don't think I would have started this business otherwise," said Sellers. She was called back to Fishers and said she took the buyout in 1995.

Sellers said she started taking orders for vests, jackets and leg-

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