

# Merchants foresee price-conscious holiday buying

By Hollie Wieland

The recession has had a marked decrease in demand for certain goods, and according to a local economist, 1980 Christmas sales probably will be down in these same areas.

James R. Schmidt, assistant professor of economics at UNL, said products experiencing the largest decrease in demand include automobiles, expensive appliances, tools and equipment.

The 1980 October Consumer Price Index showed a 12.6 percent increase from last October, Schmidt said. But, after peaking in April, Schmidt said there has been some slow down.

"This round of inflation has been a reflection of high interest rates," Schmidt said.

"We are in the midst of a very slow and moderate recovery from the recession," he said. He also said that it would be the end of 1981 before the United States attains the same economic position as held in the beginning of 1980.

"I think Christmas shopping expenditures will be not spectacular because of the recession," Schmidt said. He added that consumers probably will be very cautious about buying gifts.

However, according to Doc Chaves, director of promotions and public relations at Miller & Paine, the recession has not caused any marked depression in Christmas sales.

Chaves said that traditionally, sales are slow before Thanksgiving but that "signs of this recession everyone is talking about are just not being seen."

Although shoppers are being more careful with their money, they are continuing to buy things, Chaves said.

In his years working in marketing, Chaves said he has noticed that Nebraska does not necessarily follow the same buying patterns as the rest of the United States. He said Nebraska is more isolated from the factors that influence other states' buying patterns.

He said even if the United States is in a recession, if farmers in Nebraska have a good year, department store sales seem to remain up.

Bob Durrie, president of Magee's, said "we feel people are very price conscious this Christmas. Sales are running about even right now, but not quite as good as usual.

"We hope we can project large Christmas increases, but quite honestly, I think it will be more modest increases in each department," Durrie said.

Art Trehearn, manager of J.C. Penney's, said that sales look good this year. He said it was too early to determine how Christmas sales were doing but that sales as a whole do not seem affected by the recession.

Jay Gordon, of Lawlor's, said sales seem to be lagging some but he thought it was due to the abnormally late warm season. Although sport items and other non-necessities are often the first to slow in sales during a recession, he did not think the recession was the cause of this lag.

Gordon said he is still optimistic about Christmas sales and thinks they will pick up with the onset of cold weather.

# Knowing her subjects important to photographer

By Maureen Costello

Margaret MacKichon, a photographer for the last 13 years whose work is on display in the main lounge of the Nebraska Union, has spent time in the last two years photographing the Sandhills.

"I think it is important to get to know a subject to be able to photograph it," she said. "I have to get to know the people and how they live, not just when someone special comes to visit. I can't just photograph something for a week and feel I've done a good job."

MacKichon took 10 to 12 trips to the Sandhills, two weeks each time, between 1977 and 1979. MacKichon had two grants, one from the Nebraska Arts Council, and one from the Nebraska Committee on the Humanities. She was sponsored by the Nebraska Sandhills Cattleman's Association. The members of the association invited MacKichon to stay at their ranches while she photographed the area, she said.

MacKichon was first interested in photographing the people of the Appalachians, around the area she came from. She spent ten years photographing Kentucky.

MacKichon said she thought Nebraska had many of the same qualities as the Appalachians.

"The economy and lifestyles are very different but the values are similar," MacKichon said.

MacKichon's work on the Appalachians was on display at Sheldon Art Gallery about five years ago. A rancher called her and told her she might like to do similar work with the Sandhills, because of the use of irrigation and big corporations moving in, smaller ranches were disappearing, MacKichon said.

MacKichon found the people of the Sandhills very independent.

"They have a self-sufficiency that I think develops out of their isolation. They value human relationships a lot and they tend to work together as a community. Even if they were spread out over 20 miles, they still function as a community," MacKichon said.

MacKichon photographed the Sandhills through all the seasons.

"That winter there was ground cover from Thanksgiving to Easter. I stayed out as long as the rancher stayed out, but I was not as used to the cold."

"Among my range of experiences was getting frost-bitten, stuck in the snow and snowed in. I think I have a lot of good friends out there that I want to keep up with," MacKichon said.

During the two years, MacKichon was an artist in residence in Scottsbluff and noticed that the Western edge of the Sandhills is different from the eastern edge.

"The eastern edge is taking more of a business approach instead of a life style while the western edge takes pride in doing things the old way," she said.

MacKichon received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from UNL and her master's of science and master's of arts degrees from New Mexico. She worked as an intern at the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York. She currently teaches photography at Wesleyan University.

MacKichon is putting her photographs of Kentucky in a book. She is working on the text and is also putting photographs together for competition for the Imogene Cunningham Award. Only 14 people are nominated nationally for this award.

The Mid-America Arts Alliance is also considering travelling her Sandhills photographs through five states, MacKichon said.

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