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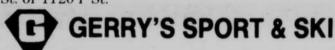
University of Nebraska State Museum

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Shells designed in landlocked state

SHELLS from page 10

shop on campus.

But the success of Furlong's business is visible in more than just her expanded line.

'I have this dream studio," she said of the turn-of-the-century warehouse she has turned into a comfortable, artistic workplace

Furlong bought the warehouse after moving to Salem, and Tho-mas Laging, professor of architec-ture at UNL, went to Oregon to help her design the new interior in a post-modern style that preserved the old brick flavor of the building,

She named it Carriage House Studio after her original workplace in Lincoln.

Furlong said it's interesting that she began designing with shells in a state so far from the ocean.

'I had to move to Oregon to sort of legalize my shell designs," she jokes with friends.

Yet her years in Nebraska were inspiring, Furlong said. She became a Christian the year she began her ornaments. The beliefs she had just taken on and the emotions she was feeling that Christmas season undoubtedly influenced her work, she said.

Now that her Christmas angels and wreaths are being mass-produced, Furlong considers them to be designs rather than art. But she



Margaret Furlong

continues to work on her other interests and finds inspiration in her four-year-old daughter Caitlin and the environment of Oregon.

Furlong said doing landscapes became hard when she first moved west. Oregon has fewer open spaces than Nebraska, she said, and she felt a bit claustrophobic in the heavily wooded environment.

But although she loved Nebraska, "we have a new love now

in Oregon." This fall, for example, she began working on some landscapes of the northwest part of the state. And she does colorful pastel and watercolor pieces on yearly trips to Hawaii.

So while she is busy most of the time putting her ideas into her ornaments and their packaging, her landscapes are different.

"I do those just for myself," she

Stores nationwide are trying to predict what the season's hot-selling toys will be

certain of two things at this time of year: Christmas is coming, and the ness children of America will find scads of gift-wrapped toys under ornament-

But no one - not toymakers, storeowners or Wall Street analysts sure just what those toys will be. Unlkie past Christmases, there are no "mega-hits" in sight, such as last year's Lazer Tag, or Teddy Ruxpin in

Many toys for which manufacu-trers had high hopes early in the year have either flopped or never made it to market because of production prob-

And many stars of the past — such as Lazer Tag and Pound Puppies have lost their shine and retailers are marking them down to clear the way for new merchandise.

With these problems, 1987 has been a disappointment for much of the toy industry. Sales and earnings have fallen off sharply and some toymakers most notably Worlds of Wonder Inc., which says it may seek a merger with another company - have been hurt badly.

With sales down, many retailers have bought cautiously for this Christmas, and that could mean popular toys are in short supply, said Paul Valentine, a toy industry analyst with Standard & Poor's Corp.

"This is going to be the toughest year to find the toys you want since 1983," when there were not enough of the hottest toys to go around, Valentine said.

But their is a possible silver lining to that cloud. If demand remains high, the toy industry could see a stronger

"Shortages are a stimulant for the toy industry," said Valentine. "It tneds to increase the attractiveness of specific toys in consumers' minds.'

However, noting that talking dolls were popular last Christmas but fizzled afterward, Valentine cau-tioned that early 1988 sales could still

A more immediate worry for many - whether the stock market

is of little concern to the toy busi-

"Despite all the doom and gloom you may hear, on Dec. 25 the holiday is going to be celebrated and when the children come down in the morning and look under the tree, they're going to find lots of gaily wrapped boxes, said David Leibowitz, an analyst with American Securities Corp. "The children of America will not be denied."

Among the toys they'll find will be a few perennial favorites and some new variations on old themes.

Video games, which are in the midst of a comeback, are expected to be big sellers, led by Nintendo Entertainment System, one of the top toys so far this year. Analysts also expect Captain Power, an interactive video

High-tech toys, including talking dolls, have largely been a disappointment this year. But analyst Valentine predicts several will have a successful Christmas, including the talking version of Coleco Industries Inc.'s Cabbage Patch Kids, which he says have "met with a successful initial re-

Two other talking dolls that have sold well are Worlds of Wonder Inc.'s Julie, adoll that can read special books and tell the difference between hot and cold, and Mattel Inc.'s Heather, a doll whose vocabulary matures like that of a child, analysts said.

Talking characters such as Mickey Mouse and Mother Goose by Worlds Bourdon, a spokeswoman for Toys R Us, the nationwide toy store chain. although a relative toy veteran, also is said to be doing well.

Valentine said he expects Coleco's talking Alf, a plush version of the NBC-TV show character, to be popular, as it has been all year.

Mr. Gameshow, an interactive board game by Lewis Galoob Toys Inc., featuring an animated, wisecraking "host," is not turning out to be as big a hit as expected, but should still do well, Valentine said.

However, most of the items indus-

NEW YORK (AP) - You can be crash will affect consumer spending try watchers expect to be on gift lists are much simpler, more basic toys. 'The early trends suggest that people

are looking for traditional rather than faddy" toys, said Peter Harris, the president of F.A.O. Schwarz, the Manhattan-based toy store chain. Board games such as Scrabble and

Trivial Pursuit, By Coleco's Selchow & Righter division, are expected to

Pictionary, the most popular board game this year, also is expected to be as big at Christmas, said Rick Anguilla, editor of Toy & Hobby World, a trade publication. The brainchild of a new company, Games Gang, Ltd., Pictinary is played like charades, but

F.A.O. Schwarz reports kaleidoscopes are big movers, and Toys R Us game by Mattel Inc., to be a best seller. says scooters are on their list of top

sellers.

Staples like Mattel's Barbie and Hasbro Inc.'s G.I. Joe — which have been on best-seller lists all year - also are expected to be under a lot of Christmas trees.

so are some toys ostensibly designed for children, but which may be a bigger hit with adults. Valentine points out two: Gotcha by LJN Toys Ltd. and Coleco's Couch Potato.

Gotcha, based on adults' survival games, includes a gun and pellets that platter washable dyes on whoever is in the line of fire.

Couch Potato, a play on the sedentary lifestyles of many Americans, is a stuffed figure wrapped in it's own sack. F.A.O. Schwarz said it has of Wonderhave sold well, said Angela already sold out of the toys and has ordered more.

Fischer-Price, a company not usu-Worlds of Wonder's Teddy Ruxpin, ally associated with hit toys, is having a strong year and should have a good Christmas with its line of preschool toys, analysts said. The company's Fun With Food, a set of plastic fake food toys, has been a hot item and likely will be in short supply this season, Anguilla said.

Fischer-Price also is marketing a video camera and recorder for children, which retails for about \$225. The analysts were split on how successful it would be, but Toys R Us listed it among its top-selling toys.