

Calendar

Blizzards in the Hand

Second Annual Globe Show

'As an adult you appreciate things about them that you don't when you're a child," says artist Margarat Nee of her collection of snow globes — or snow domes, as she likes to call them.

They go by other names: snow shakers, snowies, snowstorms, blizzard weights. "People sometimes understand one term better than another." But if none is understood, you can always use the hand gesture, says Nee. You shake up and down a small, invisible sphere, about the size of a tennis ball. "And people will go, 'Oh, yeah.' It's like the international sign."

Scott Paulson has founded and organized what has become the

LOCAL EVENTS

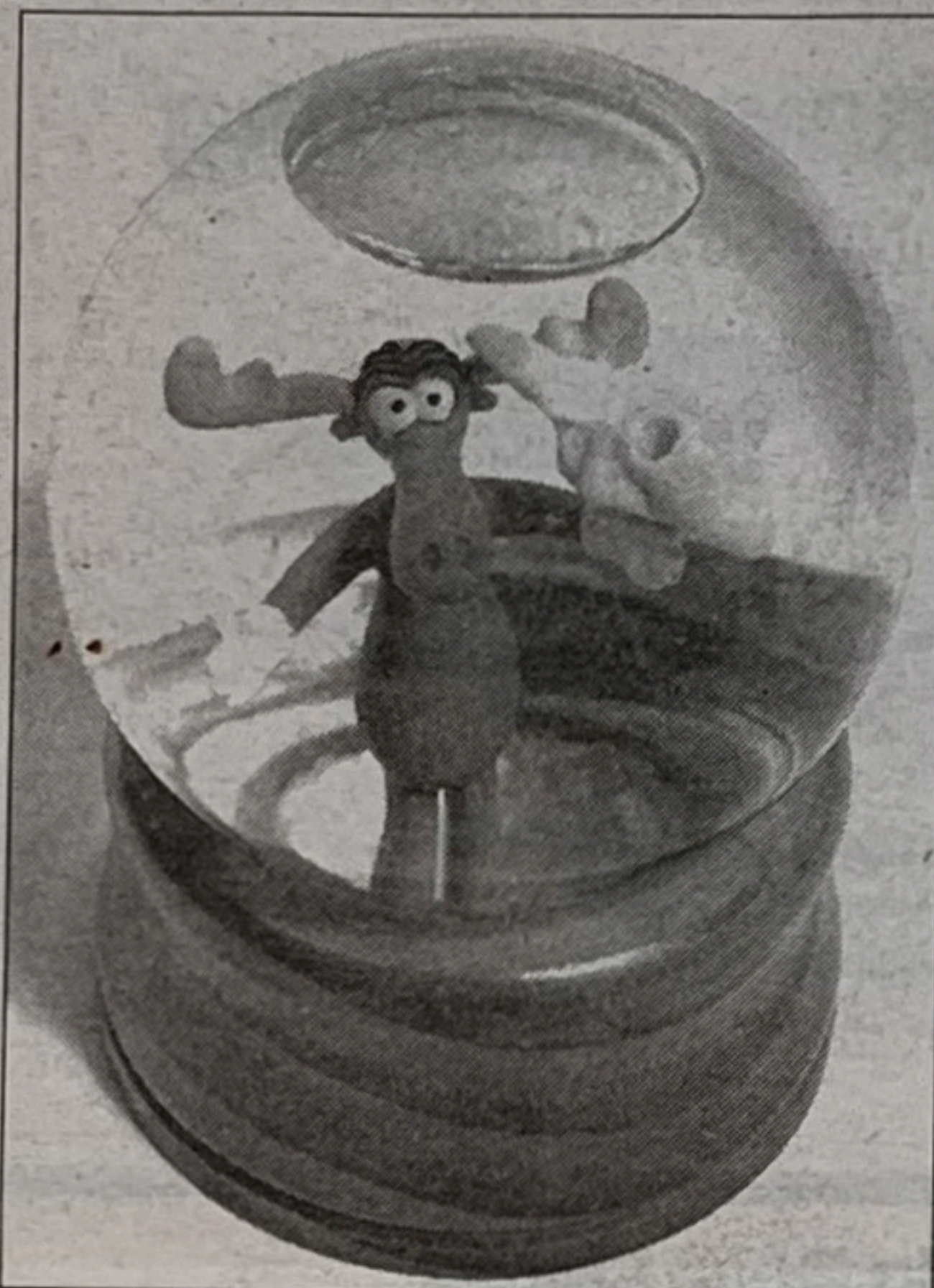
Annual Snow Globe Show at the UCSD Arts Libraries. It was he who

invited Nee to be the featured collector after learning by chance about her collection from her father, Thomas Nee, emeritus professor of music at UCSD.

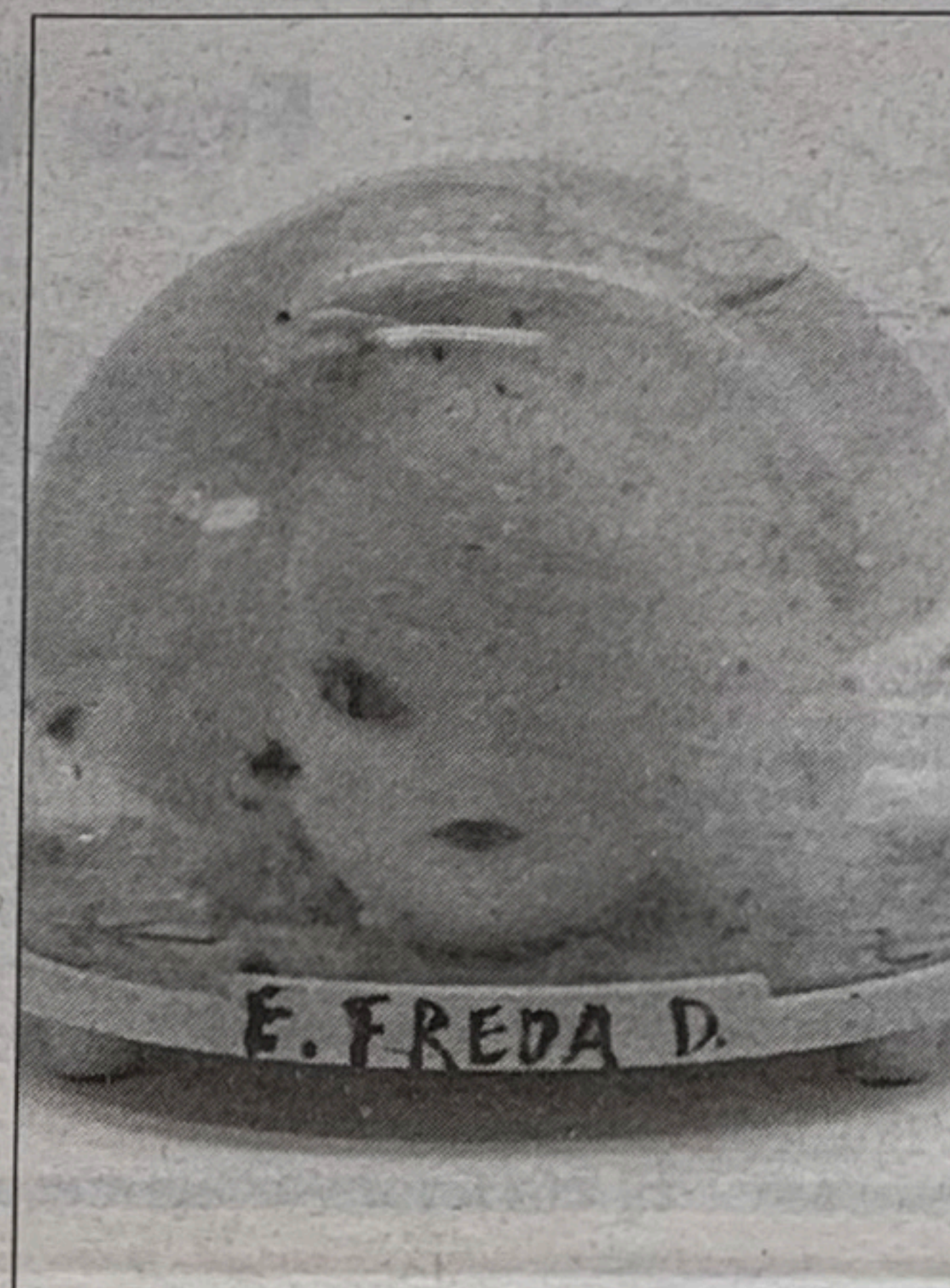
Some 300 snow globes in all are on display in six exhibition cases, two of them devoted to Nee's mass-produced travel or "location domes." One of her favorites of this kind, from San Francisco, contains a topless mermaid. (So it's in the "figural" category, as well.) "You can order them off the Internet, but the collector in me shuns that," says the 37-year-old Nee. "If I or somebody else doesn't actually get it in person at the place, it loses meaning."

One-of-a-kind snow globes, made by people who work at the library or who use it, are also part of the exhibit. "I hosted a couple of workshops here," says Paulson, who provided the empty globes and other supplies and invited people to stop by to try their hand. "Some are by artists, but others are by plain old ordinary people, which is what I'm really going after here. So you'll see a lot of traditional, here's-a-picture-of-my-granddaughter ones, and you'll also see the decapitated-head-from-the-baby-doll ones."

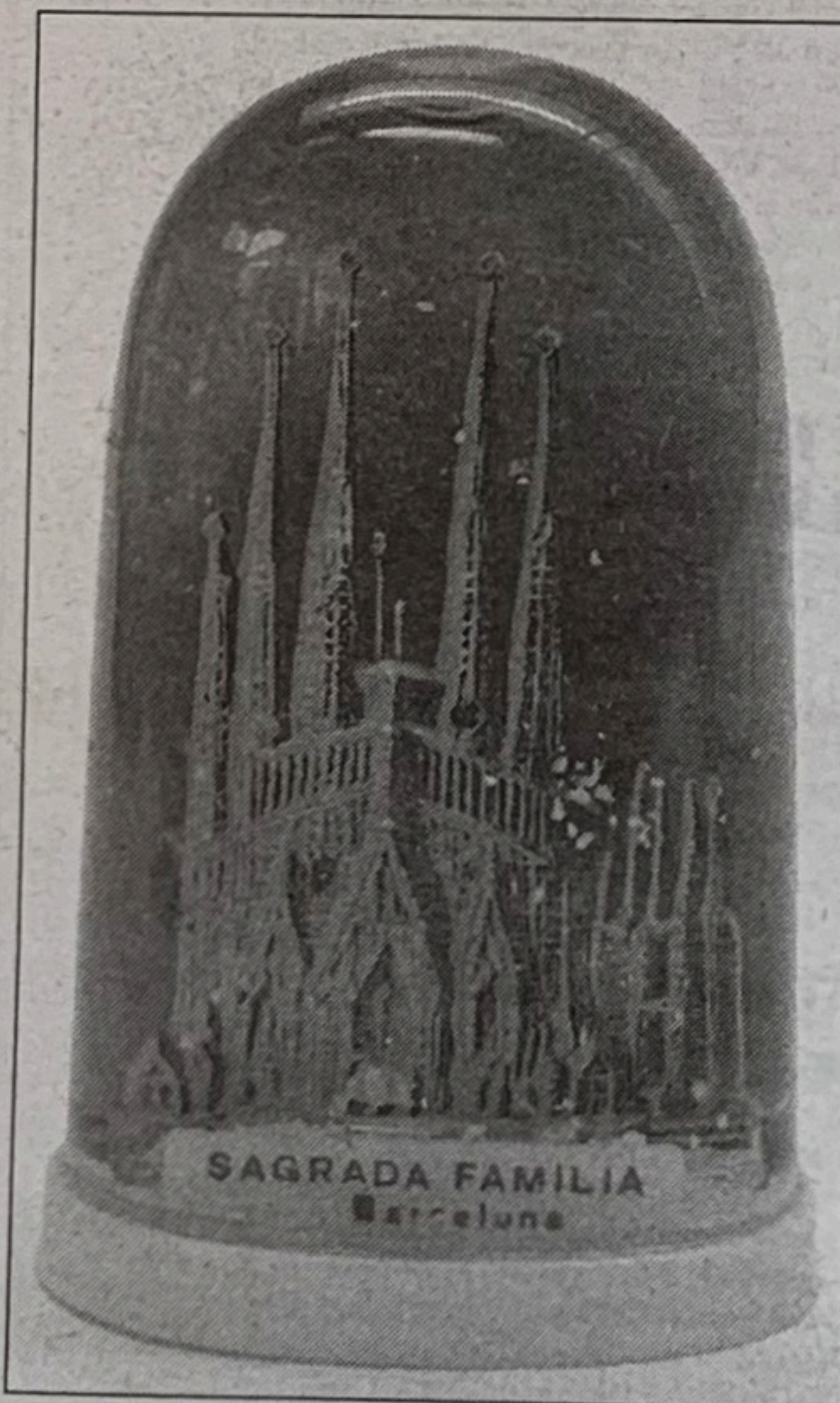
The centerpiece of one made by music librarian Ken Calkins is a plastic Bullwinkle holding a skull with antlers. "The workshop entitled it 'Bullwinkle as Hamlet,'" says Paulson. Arts librarian Leslie Abrams produced a globe showing a picture of her son throwing a snowball. Inside one of Paulson's is a



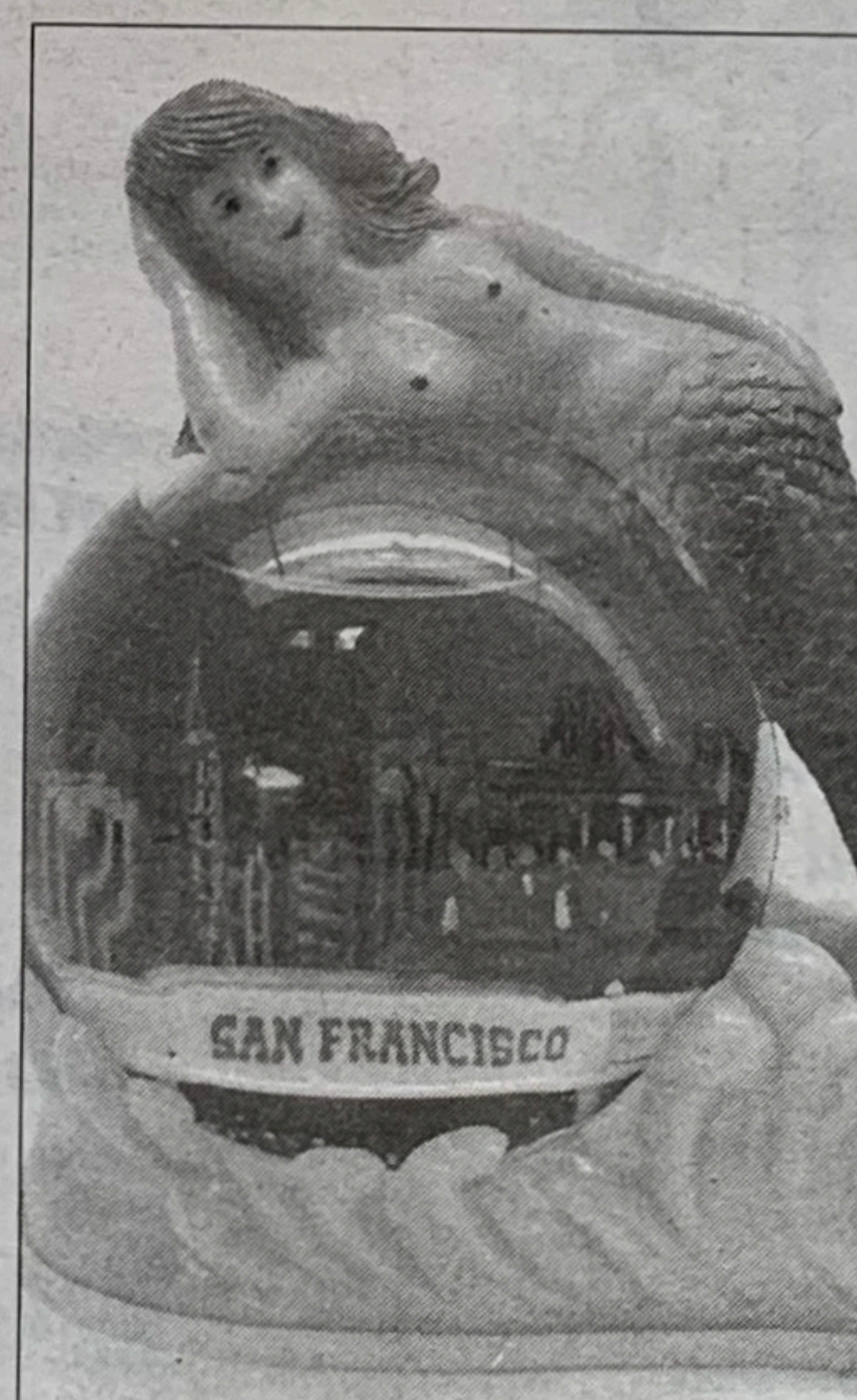
Bullwinkle as Hamlet



Doll's head by Margarat Nee



Sagrada Familia



Topless mermaid

butterfly net that catches butterflies when the globe is shaken. Another of his has chandeliers whose shaken candle flames appear to flicker.

"First-time makers of snow globes are surprised to discover that a figurine becomes magnified by the water," Paulson says.

That, of course, would happen even if it weren't treated water. "Glycerin has been added to it," says Nee, who has on display some of her own creations, including ones featuring a plastic soldier, a merman, an evil-eye icon, a bleeding heart, and toy dogs.

"It's the glycerin that makes the snow swirl instead of just drop. And you can adjust the level of snowstorm by how much glycerin you add. If there's only a little, you don't get the flurry effect. With more glycerin, the snow swirls before it floats down, giving you that strange little kitschy Zen moment."

The snow globes in this exhibit can be handled. "Each afternoon we take out ten or a dozen different ones for people to shake up," says Paulson.

What is it about them that does captivate? "Nostalgia is part of it," says Nee. "When you're a child, your world

is like that: small, protected, where the snow falls gently, everything is always the same, and nothing comes in and changes it."

There's something unsettling about them, too, notes Nee. "You'll see the little human figures inside and think, 'There's no escape! They're stuck in there forever.' So the domes are both utopian and dystopian, both perfect and flawed. For example, these are supposedly ideal representations, but everything's out of proportion. Architecture, wildlife, geography — they're all jammed together."

When you have a lot of globes representing the same place, as Nee does, you start noticing what aspects of those idealizations have been changed or eliminated over time. "All my New York City domes include the Twin Towers. I've begun to wonder if they're starting to make new ones, without them. And I wonder if there's been a run on the old ones by New Yorkers as well as tourists."

As an artist, she appreciates the beauty of some globe designs. One featuring the multispired cathedral of the Sagrada Familia, which was brought back from Barcelona for her by friends, is particularly "picturesque," she says.

The first snow globes were made of glass and sold in the late 19th Century as early world's fair souvenirs; the snow was variously bone chips, ground-up rice, bits of porcelain, and sand. Illustrations for later snow-globe patents are on display at the exhibit.

These days, usually, the globes are made of plastic; the snow is vermiculite; and some snow isn't snow at all. It's been replaced with glitter.

Nee regrets that the figurines are often replaced with cheap, two-dimensional panel images. "This goes against the very nature of these domes as containers of wondrous worlds. As a result, my collecting has slowed considerably in recent years."

— Jeanne Schinto

2nd Annual Snow Globe Show
Arts Libraries, Geisel Library UCSD
Through February 10
Monday-Thursday,
8:00 a.m.-midnight;
Friday, 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.;
Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.;
Sunday 10:00 a.m.-midnight
Free
Info: 858-534-8074

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