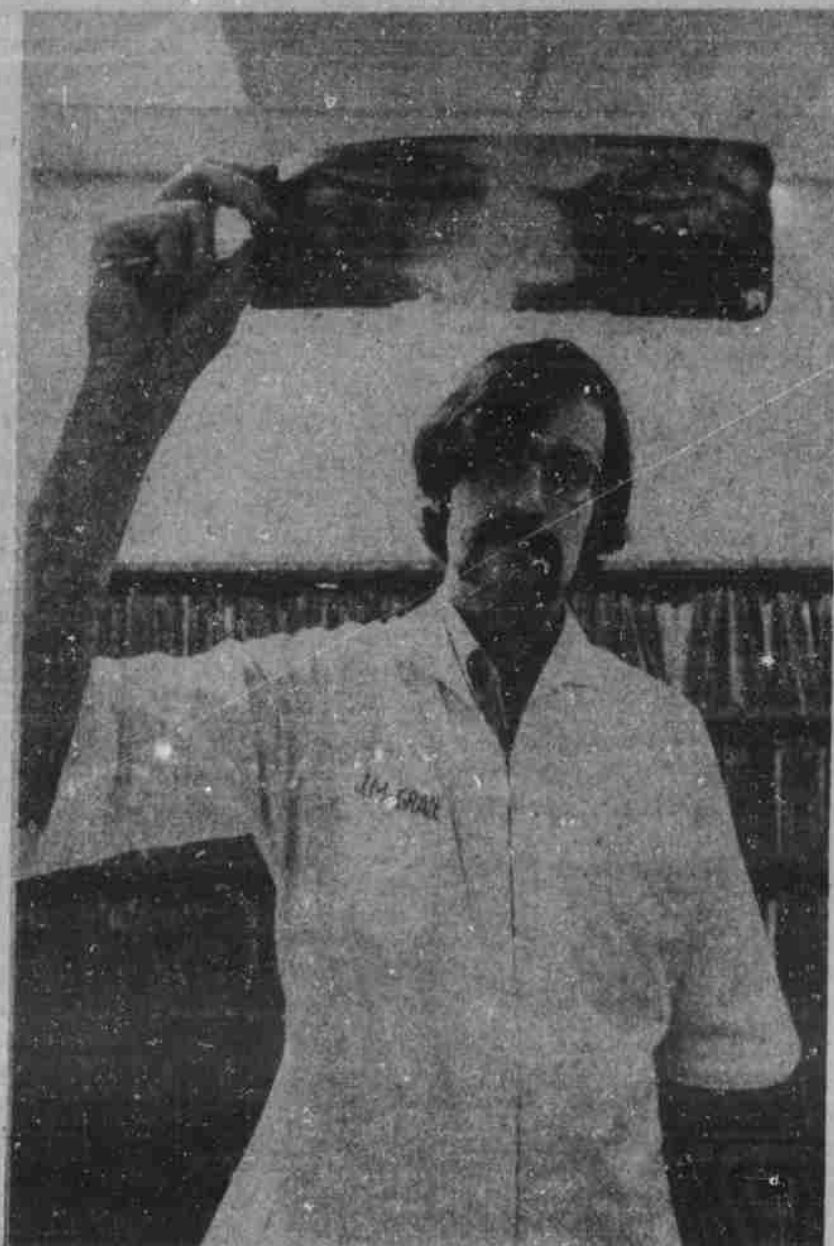
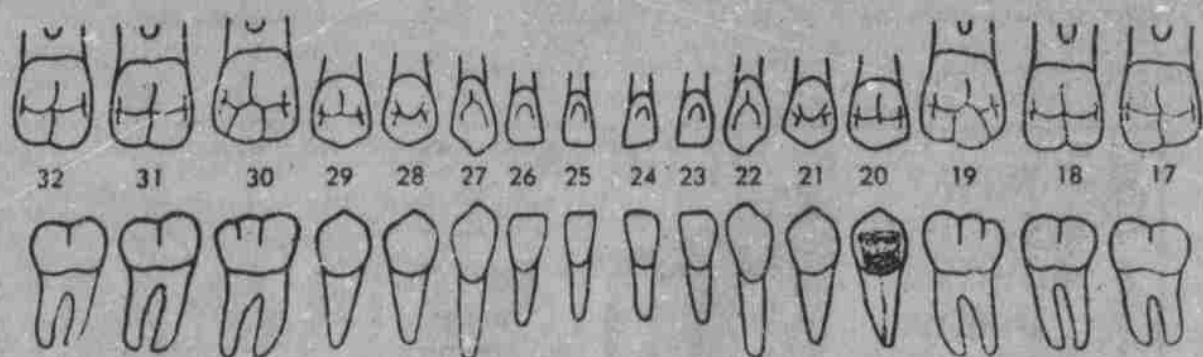


SERVICE RENDERED CHART



## It's called 'restoration' now

By Lynn Silhasek

Getting a cavity filled isn't what it used to be, at least at the UNL College of Dentistry.

It's now called getting your tooth restored, useable again, as part of the preventative dentistry the college practices, according to Dr. William Ahrens, assistant dean of dental clinics.

It's repair work that should never have to have been performed, if people took care of their teeth, according to Dr. Robert Wood, director of the college's department of preventative dentistry and community health.

But tooth repair at the dental clinics does happen, at the rate of 43,566 sittings for 1973, according to Assistant Collete Dean Eugene Merchant. The figure includes the total number of visits made to the dental clinics. Patients making their first visits to the clinic in 1973 numbered 3,788, Merchant said. The majority of these visits were for tooth decay, he said. Twenty-five per cent of the patients are University students, he said.

According to Ahrens, patients are accepted depending on what kind of dental work students need to perform in the clinic as class requirements.

All people requesting dental appointments at the clinic receive an initial free examination to determine what type of dental work they need done, according to Ahrens. The person's case is then reviewed by a board of instructors, he said. If the person is accepted as a patient, the

assigned dental student conducts an additional examination to inform the patient on the cost and extent of the work needed, Ahrens said. Fees vary with the case, he said.

Approximately 110 junior and senior dental students work at different times within several 50-seat general clinics and within a children's ward, Ahrens said. Work includes oral surgery, fitting patients for braces, and decayed tooth restoration, he said.

But dental students also want to prove they're not the drill-wielding pain-inflictors that the public sees them as, Ahrens said.

They practice a preventative dentistry as consultants in Lincoln public schools, two Lancaster county schools, several Head Start programs in schools throughout Nebraska, several Lincoln homes for the elderly, and a state home for the mentally retarded, Wood said.

Their work ranges from teaching 6-year-olds to brush their teeth properly to advising nursing home residents on the cost of false teeth, Wood said.

Most of the pain and cost in dental work is caused by neglect by the patient, Wood said.

Students are encouraged to co-practice to serve a greater number of patients, Wood said. The idea follows a national trend toward the establishment of group practices employing large dental staffs, Ahrens said.



Photographs by  
Gail Folda