



Photo by John Crancer

Dr. Gary Jones of the UNL Dental School programs his computer on a "rose pattern."

# Unusual 'patient' PLATO aids practice of dental skill

By Janet Lliteras

"The patient is now seated in the dental chair. What are you going to do?"

These words flashed on a 12-inch screen in front of the dental student. The patient, PLATO, is a black box sitting on a desk in a library.

The patient's "father" is Dr. Gary Jones, associate dentistry professor. Jones has received a \$1.5 million educational research grant from the National Library of Medicine to develop clinical simulations on computers.

The computer terminal plays the role of patient, Jones said. It responds as a normal patient would when the proper treatment is given.

He said the completed project will let practicing dentists, recent dentistry graduates and dental students actually see and touch the patient using color slides and touch panels.

They can ask the patient questions and receive immediate answers, he explained.

He said he hopes to use this system "as a resource for developing decision-making and problem-solving skills in dental practitioners."

Actual patients' responses will be programmed into the computer from patients with toothaches, gum problems, headaches and anything in or around the oral cavity, he said.

The student makes all the decisions and prescribes the treatment, Jones said. Their approach to the problems will be scored and compared against a standard established by review panels of nationally recognized dentists in dental education and practice, he said.

The machine he is using costs \$8,000, but is being supplied for free by the Control Data Corp. Since UNL's computer is not big enough to support his project, Jones said, he is working on the PLATO computer system of Minneapolis, which is connected by a telephone line.

It costs about \$660 a month to use the system, he said.

# East European militaries expert speaks at UNL

Describing his job as "being where the action is" Dale Herspring, Dept. of State Foreign Service officer, arrived at UNL Thursday by way of Warsaw, Poland and Washington D.C. for two days of lecturing and class presentations.

His appearance was sponsored by ROTC, the Slavic and East European Area Studies Program and the Pi Sigma Alpha professional political science fraternity. He was invited because of his reputation as "perhaps the only man in the U.S. familiar with and understanding the role of East European Militaries," said Ivan Volgyes, UNL political science professor and Pi Sigma Alpha sponsor.

More than 100 students and faculty members attended the Feb. 17 open lecture where Herspring analyzed and commented on the reliability of the East European military, its strength against internal forces or external Communist threat.

**Minor part of job**

Although Herspring lectures at universities, academies

and military bases, he said lecturing is a minor part of his job. He said he does not lecture for money because there is no compensation involved except expenses, which are paid by the sponsoring organizations.

He said his first interest is Soviet political affairs, but he lectures because academics is his second bag.

Herspring said he tries to gear his talks to what the students want to hear. While East European security might be stressed in a lecture at Annapolis, he would incorporate the agricultural aspect in his talk at UNL, he said.

His main purpose in discussions is to get student feedback, preferring to answer questions relevant to students instead of explaining what Soviets do, he said.

**Sensitive to problems**

"I know something students don't. That's why they come to hear me. But through their questions I get new ideas and become sensitive to their problems," he said. In more than five years with the U.S. State Dept. as

a Foreign Service officer, he has worked in the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs and served a tour in Poland counseling jailed Americans and providing the Polish with visas.

His current assignment as desk officer to the Soviet Union makes him responsible for analyzing and reporting on external Soviet relations, he said.

The opportunity to make security arrangements for former President Ford's stop in Poland almost two years ago was labeled by Herspring as the high point of his military career.

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