

Sharon 5-7 min

Good afternoon. It is my great pleasure and honor to introduce this year's recipients of the Jean Y. Jew Women's Rights Award.

I have been to several of these Celebrations, and the person introducing the Jean Jew Award winner generally begins by explaining that they have known the winner for a long time. That is not the case today. I met Pauline Brine, Beth Pelton, and Nancy Thompson only recently. I came to know them not as colleagues or friends, but as an historian. At the Iowa Women's Archives, I encountered the documents that told the story of their 1990s legal struggle to save the department of dental hygiene, which had an all-woman faculty and student body, and was the only department in the College of Dentistry with a woman chair.

The UI Depart of Dental Hygiene started in 1953, and rose to national prominence under the leadership of Pauline Brine, the visionary department chair who took over the program in 1965. Beth Pelton, a graduate of the program joined the faculty in 1974, and Nancy Thompson, who had earned advanced degrees in dental hygiene and socio-medical sciences at Columbia, joined in 1980. On their watch, the UI Depart of Dental Hygiene became the leading voice in a national movement to transform the profession.

The three women shared the conviction that the role of the hygienist should be expanded, and that hygienists should provide primary oral health care outside the dentist's office, in non-traditional settings such as schools, hospitals, and community clinics. The UI was the site of a five-year landmark study, which concluded that dental hygienists could be trained to handle a wider range of functions, and to work more independently. Unfortunately, as the dental hygiene faculty attempted to implement these findings, their efforts were undercut by those who had no interest in seeing dental hygienists' acquire a broader and more independent role.

Thus it was not really a surprise to the dental hygiene faculty when, in 1991, the UI announced its intention to close the department. But Professors Brine, Pelton, and Thompson, three of the four tenured faculty members, resolved to fight for their department and their profession. Contrary to what the University claimed, dental hygiene was not a financial burden on the University, Thompson stated at a forum held by the UI CSW. Rather, this excuse was offered as “a pretext for displacing tenured women faculty who are committed to hygiene’s occupational development.” The closing of the program, she stated, would “rob dental hygiene, a 99% female occupation, of the control of its own destiny.”

After Brine, Pelton, and Thompson failed to persuade the administration to retain the program, they turned to the law. In 1993, they filed a lawsuit against the UI in federal court in Des Moines. They charged the University with sex discrimination, and with retaliating against them for challenging the decision to close dental hygiene.

The lawsuit to keep the dental hygiene program open did not succeed. If it had, the women we honor today would have received the Jean Y. Jew Women’s Rights Award a long time ago. But it is precisely because they did NOT win, that we are here to recognize them today. By speaking out about the sex discrimination they experienced, by documenting it and preserving those documents at the IWA, they created a path we can trace and a history of activism for others to call upon. They have given us, in other words, a useable past.

They drew attention to the fact that discrimination is not found only in its most blatant forms—where comparable faculty positions are paid less, or where women are sexually harassed. It is also found in the daily decisions that deprive women-dominated departments of resources, that exclude them from strategic decision-making, and that belittle them as peripheral to the

mission of the University. But while the law failed to recognize these as discrimination, we do not have to make the same mistake.

It is also important to remember that the law does change over time. And when historians unravel legal change, they find a long string of unsuccessful cases like dental hygiene. These cases help us understand the complex and inter-connected process of social and legal change.

Using the law to fight sex discrimination is not for the faint of heart. These battles are lengthy, draining, and often unsuccessful. The courage and stamina they require is beyond the imagination of most of us.

Like Jean Jew before them, Pauline Brine, Elizabeth Pelton, and Nancy Thompson answered the call of history. The status of women on this campus is better because they did. So while we mourn the loss of dental hygiene, we celebrate the women who fought for it. Please join me in congratulating the 2011 recipients of the Jean Y. Jew Women's Rights Award: Pauline Brine, Beth Pelton, and Nancy Thompson.

Nancy reads Pauly's

The following remarks are from Pauline Brine

"Members of the Council on the Status of Women and the Women's Resource and Action Center,

Although I could not be present today to celebrate with you excellence and noteworthy achievement of University of Iowa women, I consider the honor of being named one of the recipients of the Jean Jew Award of special significance.

It is of significance because more than a decade ago my two colleagues, who are here with you today, and I were plaintiffs in a discrimination case involving this University. The case was viewed at various levels of review by the defendants as frivolous and we, the plaintiffs, were labeled as troublemakers. The outcome of the litigation was not favorable to us. The case was closed and related documents were tucked away in the Iowa Women's Archives of the Main University of Iowa Library.

Now, more than 15 years later, your tribute to us has renewed and extended public awareness of discriminatory behaviors and how these behaviors are used to justify predetermined outcomes.

As groups dedicated toward advancing the status of women, you are to be commended. I am proud and privileged to be recognized this year as one of the recipients of the Jean Y. Jew Award.

Pauline Brine

## Nancy

We truly are grateful to finally be linked with Jean Jew. 16 years ago, we attempted to make this link, but were prevented from doing so. We are also grateful that the Council on the Status of Women and WRAC made our pain their pain. This award is a statement of courage in the face of injustice.

The moral imperative which drove me to take a stand for the UI Dental Hygiene Department, is exemplified by Isaiah's challenge that I am to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, and free the oppressed. We were called to take a stand against the chilly environment for female dental hygiene faculty, staff and students in our workplace.

In the mid 90's, the playing field of ideas in the College of Dentistry had two teams - primarily male dentists and female dental hygienists. The playing field was not even for many reasons- tensions were engaged between dominant and developing occupations, treatment and preventive care emphases, as well as male and female workers. In the same time period, seven other baccalaureate dental hygiene programs were eliminated nationwide in the same time period, but none had the resources to counter these unjust decisions.

After years of being marginalized, we applied our resources to a quest to retain our department. Our vision assumed hygienists would use their mind as well as their hands, provide an evidence-based mix of preventive and therapeutic services, and resume providing services for the full spectrum of US citizens, including those unable to access care in the private dental care system. We rejected organized dentistry's vision of hygienists as Bonsai trees- cute but far less than their potential.

Our case was unsuccessful, partially due to the fact that statements by dentists were valued over those put forth by hygienists in spite of the availability of solid research findings

supporting hygienists' ideas. Loss of the department has had a negative impact on dental hygiene and the dental care system in Iowa.

A colleague said that we look too happy in the program photo. Those hygiene smiles reflect our hope for a time when others will build on Jean Jew's success and our effort to rid the academic workplace of real yet subtle forms of exploitation, when, oceans of justice and rivers of fairness will become reality.

Beth -

We thank the committee for seeing that one person would not have been able to stand up for what we did, to stand up to those we did, and to do that standing up for as long as we did. Pauly, Nancy and I have different strengths that gave us the collective abilities and the courage to seek justice. We were gifted with patience and love and sacrifice of our families, closest friends, students and alumni. We had a gifted trial lawyer. All of this was necessary to be able to do what we did.

We thank Sharon Lake who found the dental hygiene story in the Iowa Women's Archives. We invite you to study the 30+ linear feet of manuscripts that unfold a well-documented example of sex discrimination in academia.

Dental hygiene was not the only female-dominated unit at Iowa that experienced discrimination. Occupational therapy, home economics, women's physical education, health and sports studies, and dental hygiene were leaders in their respective disciplines. All had quality programs. All had quality faculty. Each of these disciplines had student demand and societal need. The university eliminated them, one by one.

The ivory tower pattern of discrimination against women is predictable. It begins with marginalization. It begins with marginalization. The marginalization is insidious. It takes on many forms and occurs over a course of time. After the administration has marginalized the unit for an extended period, the administration declares the unit is too small, or is weak, or is inefficient. Finally, the administration acts to extinguish the unit. This finale act is disguised in alibis such as, "Strategic Planning", "Building for Excellence", budget cutbacks, reallocation, and restructuring.

Near the steps of Calvin Hall is a plaque in memory of Professor Jane A Weiss. The inscription says, "The first state university to admit women on an equal basis with men was

the University of Iowa in 1855.” Once women are admitted, are they treated on an equal basis with men? After female-dominated disciplines of study are established at Iowa, are they treated on an equal basis with their male-dominated counterparts?

Right now there are units at Iowa that are experiencing this pattern of discrimination. It must be seen for what it really is. Academic sex discrimination must be fought and it must be thwarted.

All of us in this room stand on the shoulders of those who walked **before us** to rid discrimination. Let us of this generation walk **beside one another** to keep addressing the injustice, so that the generations who **walk behind** truly can realize women being treated on an equal basis with men.



