

## School Experiences in an Historical Context

Jean Taylor was born in San Mateo, California on September 17, 1944. She later moved to Sacramento. As a child she excelled in her academics. However, her first experience with blatant sexism was in high school with her crush. He claimed it was not fair that she received higher marks than he did, for he needed better grades for his "career." This experience was only momentary though. Mrs. Taylor now claims "It inoculated me against it (sexism)." Unfortunately, she lost touch with reality and started hanging out with the bad crowd. She was known as the "ringleader" of the mischievous children.

After high school she enrolled in Mount Holyoke, a women's college, in Massachusetts because she had never been east of the Rocky Mountains. She majored in chemistry and graduated Phi Beta Kappa, first in her class in 1966. Taylor, however, through her rebellious childhood, learned to question authority and was not able to do so in the chemistry laboratory at Mount Holyoke. This began to inspire her exploration into other fields of study, but she still had a love for chemistry. She later enrolled in the University of California at Berkley where she was influenced by her hiking club and her boyfriend to audit algebraic topology and differential geometry. These courses encouraged her to switch her emphases to mathematics but yet she still received her master's degree in physical chemistry in 1968. She also became very active in the protesting of the Vietnam War. Later, she moved to England shortly after her wedding of her long-time boyfriend, Frederick J. Almgren. Here, she pursued her master's degree in mathematics at the University of Warwick and graduated in 1971.

Soon after, she returned to the U.S. and attended Princeton's doctoral program in mathematics. In 1973 she received her PhD. and focused her dissertation on the topic of "Regularity of the Singular Set of Two-Dimensional Area-Minimizing Flat Chains Modulo 3 in  $R^3$ ." This solved the problem on length and smoothness of soap-film triple functions curves, which had puzzled mathematicians for centuries.