

Introducing: Professor Joe Mason

The UW Geography Department is happy to welcome a new Assistant Professor, Joseph A. Mason. He is currently teaching Geog 320 Geomorphology and 525 Soil Geomorphology, and has also taken over as the Physical Geography undergraduate advisor.

While Prof. Joe Mason's face may be new to most students, he certainly is no stranger to Science Hall. He received his Ph.D. in Geography from UW-Madison in 1995. Jim Knox was the advisor for his thesis, entitled *Effects of Glacial-Interglacial Climate Change on Mass Wasting, Southeastern Minnesota*. He also holds a Master's in Soil Science from the University of Minnesota.

After earning his Ph.D. from UW, he taught at Northern Illinois University where he continued his studies of southeastern Minnesota and Illinois. He focused on loess and the effect of dust on soil development, particularly as a record of climate change.

After two years at Northern Illinois, Mason then accepted a job at the University of Nebraska, where he held a joint position with the Department of Geosciences and at the Nebraska State Geological Survey, where he was involved with a large surficial-geography mapping project.

While in Nebraska, Mason also continued his studies of loess. "Nebraska has the best loess," Mason raves. "People forget that loess doesn't have to be glacial. The deposits in Nebraska are thick and were deposited ten times faster than those in Wisconsin. They're similar to the big loess fields in China."

The depth and speed of the Nebraska loess deposits allow for long, complete, high-resolution records. Mason has been instrumental in developing proxy records of paleo-environmental conditions for the Great Plains. He plans to continue his research in this area during the summers.

In his free time, Mason enjoys backpacking and camping. One of his favorite spots is the Wind River Range in Wyoming, but he also recommends the Sylvania Wilderness Area, just east of the Wisconsin border on the Upper Peninsula.

As an instructor, Mason will focus on teaching soil and geomorphology classes within the physical geography discipline. This semester he is teaching Geog 320 Geomorphology and Geog 525 Soil Geomorphology. Next semester he will probably teach Geog 120 Global Physical Environment and Geog 431 Soils of the World.



Mason has also taken over as the physical geography undergrad advisor. He hasn't had a lot of visitors yet, but he's reading up on the major requirements and policies so he'll be ready for spring enrollment.

So if you need some advice or just want to welcome him to Madison, stop by his office at 207 Science Hall. His office hours are Wednesday 10:00 am to noon, and Thursday 9:00 to 11:00. Welcome, Prof. Mason!

Written by Jen Bruce

The Geography of ...

Wisconsin Hauntings



A Wisconsin folklorist named Robert Gard once stated that Wisconsin may have more ghosts per square mile than any other state in America. Madisonians have long enjoyed telling tales about hauntings at Orton Park, The Bar Next Door, the Bartell Theatre, and even here on campus. It even seems like Science Hall is filled to the brim with them. Even though it seems we have more than our fair share of ghouls floating around, it seems the folks over at Marquette University in Milwaukee may have topped us.

There are a number of alleged haunted spots on their campus, but perhaps the most famous is its East Hall. This building was once a YMCA and is said to be home to a ghostly boy who has been nicknamed "Whispering Willie". Legends say that Willie was once a young boy who drowned in the swimming pool and since that time has been seen swim-

ming alongside solitary students who are doing laps in the Rec Plex pool. His ghost is also known for opening and closing doors, turning lights on and off, unrolling toilet paper in empty stalls and of course, (which earned him his namesake) repeating in whispers what people are saying.

Ghostly tales began to be told at Johnston Hall in the 1960's. According to the legends, two Jesuits committed suicide from the fifth floor balcony of the building and have been haunting the place ever since. Students have reported seeing pale faces of two figures in fifth floor windows, have experienced plunging temperatures, unexplained footsteps and voices, and say that cameras or other recording equipment frequently fail to work. Two years ago newspaper staff spent the night on the fifth floor and according to their stories, captured a "strange human figure" on film

and heard voices that they could not explain.

The stories also say that the spirit of a Native American man also haunts the basement and lower levels of the building. This ghost's appearances are always accompanied by extreme cold and a pale blue light. He is said to be angry about the fact that Johnston Hall sits atop land that was once used as a burial ground for the Mascoutens tribe.

According to the Marquette Tribune, Cobeen Hall is another reportedly haunted spot on campus. "The ghost is an art critic. If he likes the room's occupants, he leaves them alone; if he dislikes the residents, he tears down any posters they try to hang."

Written by Aaron Stephenson

MADISON GEOGRAPHIC

The Official Newsletter of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Geography Club • October 2003



You Can Still Swim!

E.Coli in Madison's Lakes

Everyday three large lakes churn around the university and community of Madison. Lake Monona, Lake Mendota and Lake Wingra all serve as active and playful attractions of the city. However, during the second half of this summer, strains of the *e.coli* were found residing off the beaches of Lake Wingra, leading to the closure of several swim areas and dampening the spirits of Madison's water lovers.

E.coli 0157:H7, which has been found in Lake Wingra, is a dangerous bacteria originating in fecal matter that most commonly infects undercooked hamburger meat. The bacterium, once ingested, attacks the digestive system and can eventually lead to kidney failure. But why would this *e.coli* be a problem in Madison's lakes?

"It could come from a number of things," informed Kristi Sorsa, who works for the Madison Department of Public Health. Everything from sewer leaks to bird droppings have been examined, although the source is still unknown. The detection and testing of *e.coli* in bodies of water is "cutting edge," according to Sorsa, and because the traces of the bacteria are so small in the lakes, it is hard to narrow the possibilities down.

Testing done in the lakes is continually underway. Certain beaches and parts of the lake may have *e.coli* while others will not. As for now, it is best to stay clear of the contaminated beaches. The danger lies in ingesting the *e.coli* infested waters while swimming or spreading the bacteria with unwashed hands. Fish caught in the lake should be thoroughly cooked before consumption.

It is possible that the recent two-day rain event helped flush out the bacteria. However, until more is discovered, water seekers can find safe and fun swimming off the union pier. Here one can share the beauty of Madison's lakes with some ducks, dogs and friends without the fear of *e.coli* coming home with you.

Written by Ingrid Remak

Photo from Friends of Lake Wingra, <http://danenet.danenet.org/fowingra/>

UPCOMING GEOGRAPHY CLUB NEWS AND EVENTS

Welcome Back!

We're all glad to be back for another great semester, and we can't wait to get started. We'd also like to introduce the new graduate student liaison for the Geography Club - Kevin Spigel. He's a Ph.D. student in physical geography, and he has a bunch of energy and ideas for this year.

Meetings for the Fall 2003 semester will be held every 2nd and 4th Monday of every month. We meet at 6:00 p.m. in the Student Lounge, 480-B Science Hall. Meetings are open to everyone.

So far this year, we're planning to organize a camping trip, build a website, publish Madison Geography, and continue to host "Pizza and Grad Students" meetings. We're always looking for new ideas and events, so come join us and get involved!

Wisconsin Geography T-shirts now on sale!

You may have seen them at last spring's Symposium, or wandering around Science Hall. Now, the "cow" can be yours! The famous Wisconsin Geography "Cow" t-shirts can be purchased in the Geography Department office. Long-sleeve (\$15) and short-sleeve (\$10) t-shirts are available in wide range of sizes and colors, including green, gray, brown, maroon and more. Be a part of UW Geography history!

Student Lounge is always open

Need a quiet place to relax between classes or hold a group study session? Want to store your lunch in our (luke-cold) refrigerator? Look no further... the Student Lounge! Open to all students, the Lounge is located on the 4th floor of Science Hall in 480-B (just follow the signs)!