

DISCUSSION AND COMMUNICATION

MENDOTA QUAKE

On Jan. 15, 1948, at 11:40 A.M. an earth tremor jolted the University of Wisconsin campus. It was of sufficient intensity to shake some plaster off the ceiling of an office and to crack the sewer drain of one fraternity house. Otherwise little damage was done. The quake was felt by many students. One saw his books shaken off a stool and drop to the floor. Others heard windows vibrate and dishes rattle. Still others felt only a barely perceptible motion as they sat quietly studying.

The quake occurred opportunely for the beginning class in geology. They were studying earthquakes that week. When the class met the next day the instructor placed a map of the city on the board and called for a show of hands of those who had felt the tremor. Each student in turn related where he was at the time, what he was doing and what he felt. Using the modified Mercalli Scale of Intensity the isoseismal lines of the quake were plotted on the board, the results being approximately as indicated in the accompanying map.

As a classroom exercise it was very successful, increasing many-fold the students' interest in this aspect of geology. They had not been aware that the tremor was occasioned by an ice fracture on Lake Mendota resulting from a warm day of expansion following a protracted period of cold. The position of the isoseismal lines, however, indicated the approximate focus of the quake. Following the lecture several students visited the "fault zone" where they found a four-foot overthrust in ice $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick.

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