

Man drowns in quarry lake

By BILL MERTENS

A young West Burlington man has become the area's first drowning victim of the budding swimming season, the result of a mishap in a stone quarry lake south of Burlington Saturday.

Kenneth Garrett, Jr., 20, 701 E. Meadow, West Burlington, was pronounced dead at the quarry site owned by Raid Quarries Co. about 7:30 p.m. Saturday after his body was pulled from the deep, icy waters by skin diver Carl Thomson, a Burlington police officer.

Garrett apparently went under about 5 p.m. as he and a companion attempted to swim the 75-yard expanse in their clothes. Attempts to save him failed and all efforts to retrieve the body from the 20-foot-deep quarry halted until Thomson could be notified.

The drowning was the first in Des Moines county in 1975, and authorities hope the incident isn't signaling a repeat of last year, when six persons lost their lives in water-related accidents.

The afternoon started innocently enough for Garrett, said to be a former tennis star with a roomful of trophies at home, and his three companions, Paul and Castalo Gonzales, both of 1307 Angular, and Don Anderson, 601 S. Seventh. Their ages are 19, 17 and 16, respectively.

Garrett had picked up the three to go for a ride in his car, the trio said. That was earlier in the afternoon, and

the four spent some time in Crapo park before heading for the quarry.

The area is not easily accessible by auto. A rock road west of US 61 about seven miles south of Burlington leads several miles back over heavily rutted roads to a wooded area and a quarry lake, surrounded by jagged rock cliffs.

The four hadn't planned on swimming, Paul Gonzales said; in fact, he cannot swim. But, his brother and Garrett decided to swim across to touch the other cliff, and back. About halfway back, Garrett went down. Speculation by authorities was that leg cramps brought on by the cold water forced him down.

A man and woman on a bike were passing by at this time, Gonzales told sheriff's deputies. When the man saw Garrett struggle in the water, he ran to the lake and swam out to assist. The woman also jumped in to help. Garrett couldn't be found.

The unidentified man and woman left immediately, and contacted the sheriff's department at 5:30 p.m. They never returned to the drowning scene. A wrecker had to be called, to tow Garrett's car, which had run out of gas.

"We should have stayed at the park," Gonzales said on the return trip to Burlington about 8:15 p.m., after the investigation was completed.

Garrett was the son of the Kenneth Garretts in West Burlington. His father operates Garrett Refrigeration Sales & Service. Prugh's Chapel is in charge of funeral arrangements.