

LIGHTNING DATA CENTER MINUTES
JULY 9, 2010
ST. ANTHONY CENTRAL HOSPITAL, DENVER, CO
www.stanthonyldc.org

Monthly Quote: “BTW, I saw what I presume to be ball lightning once, I was 15 and rushing home on my dirt bike at about 1 am to avoid an approaching thunderstorm. I was riding along a mountain ridge in a forest mostly of huge old growth white oak trees. Ahead of me just at the limits if my head lights i saw a glowing ball, not extremely bright, seem to rise up out of the ground directly in the path.

It moved slowly enough for me get a good look but i passed under it before i could stop and when I did get stopped and turned to look back it was gone. I noticed no cloud to ground lightning at the time but the sky was full of cloud to cloud strikes at that time. I noticed no effects to the motorcycles engine or physical effects on me, my motorcycle was loud enough that I didn't notice any sound from the glowing ball.

I have no idea what it was but i always figured it was ball lightning or some similar process.” On the web at: <http://hypography.com/forums/earth-science/22469-ball-lightning-what-is-it-2.html>

1. Meeting began at 11:45 AM and adjourned at 1:05 PM.
2. Members present: Clark, Gift, Cui-Gift, Nibbe, Cherington, Wells, Yarnell, Collier, Stalder, Wachtel, and Elder. Clark moderated the meeting.
3. The LDC was shocked to learn that Sue Wiggins, a 30-year employee of St. Anthony's Trauma Services Unit, is no longer with St. Anthony's, for reasons unknown. Sue has served the LDC since its inception in 1992. She arranged for the meals we enjoy at the meetings, broadcast the minutes each month to the membership, and served as the LDC's first point of contact with the public. All of this was on top of her regular duties with the Trauma Services Unit. A Thank-You card has been purchased and most of the attendees in this month's meeting signed off on it. I will bring the card to the August meeting, so please come to the August meeting if you want to write something for Sue. After that meeting, the card will be sent to Sue. Thankfully, I was able to meet briefly with Lindsay Link, who will be taking over Sue's duties. I've had the good fortune of working with Lindsay during times when Sue was gone. Lindsay, welcome to the LDC!
4. Ken Langford advised there is progress being made on the lightning safety poster. Deb Thomas, with CU Denver, has conducted some preliminary focus group meetings, as we had announced earlier. Deb is currently compiling the data from these meetings and will be presenting her findings to the officers. Stay tuned.
5. Robert Gift and his wife Younging will be heading to China in August. Robert was instructed to take photographs of lightning protection devices in China. Hopefully, we can talk Robert into doing a slide show of their trip.

6. Howard Wachtel presented results from an Austrian physicist and his graduate student, who hypothesize ball lightning is not a real, physical phenomenon, but rather, is a hallucination induced by strong magnetic fields on the visual cortex of the person claiming to see it. According to the researchers, repetitive lightning strokes, under certain conditions, generate magnetic fields similar to those generated by TMS (Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation). TMS is used in Europe to detect the transmission of signals along the spinal cord. It is not used clinically here in the U.S. Some patients, while being treated, have reported seeing blobs of light in their fields of vision. Other scientists are skeptical of this claim because the blobs of light described often do not mesh with other descriptions of ball lightning. Here's a link to a Science News article on this topic:
http://www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/59431/title/Some_ball_lightning_reports_may_be_hallucinations
7. Jim Stalder stated he and seven other people had seen ball lightning while up on Long's Peak at approximately 13,600 feet. He recalls being at the bottom of a basin-like area and looking up to see multiple balls of light in the clouds above. He estimated he was about 100 yards away and that the balls were visible for approximately 5 minutes. He also disputes the claim the ball lightning is hallucinatory.
8. Phil and Kathy Shaver, with St. Anthony's Neurosurgery office, presented the case of a motorcyclist that was struck by lightning while on a ride. There were four riders in a line and he was the 4th. Rider #3 said a hard rain was falling at the time he was hit. He said there was a flash of light and an extremely loud clap of thunder. After that, he did not see Rider #4 in his rear-view mirror. A few minutes later, he had pulled off to the side of the road and was told by some people in a car, that they had seen Rider #4 get struck and run off the road. The lightning had split Rider #4's motorcycle helmet in half. The biker lost control and crashed into a ravine. He was taken to the hospital and was found to be comatose, with some involuntary blinking of the eyes. There were burns down his arms to his hands and also down the center of the torso. There was also a burn mark near his belly button with looked like a gunshot wound. Two dimples were found on the pavement, the distance between them being approximately the wheelbase of the motorcycle. The rider unfortunately died after he was removed from life support. It appears the lightning struck the helmet, conducted through the rider's body down to the lower torso, and then through the motorbike to ground via the wheels.
9. These minutes do not represent official positions of LDC or its members. They simply reflect the comments made at the meeting.

10. Next meeting: Friday, August 13, 2010 at 11:45 AM in Main Auditorium at St. Anthony Central Hospital. Subject: Roundtable. In either September or October, Howard Wachtel will speak on the effects of magnetic fields on the brain.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steven E. Clark, Consulting Meteorologist