

LIGHTNING STRIKE
- MY STORY -

by ELIZABETH ANNE

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN
KIDS' LIGHTNING INFORMATION AND SAFETY
BY MISS SABRINA HARWOOD
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It all began when our camp, The Green River Preserve, went on a three-day, two-night camping trip. The weather forecasters predicted some “showers and a light chance of thunderstorms.” Ha! We had finished dinner (pita pizzas) and set up our tarps; a ground and overhead. We had some foam pads on top of the tarps, as well as sleeping bags.

Our two cabins (Boys 6 and Girls 6) were laying and sitting in a circle talking. We could feel and hear a sudden downpour, but didn't think anything of it. One of the boys said he was in lightning position for a while, but later moved thinking he was just “paranoid.”

From out of nowhere, lightning struck a tree ten feet from our campsite, traveled into the ground, and caused a ground surge. All thirteen campers and five counselors got hit, but the two standing were not affected by the electricity and ran for help.

The feeling I got is hard to explain. I felt (as others) that I was rising above the ground. I seemed to be looking at myself with a red aura radiating from me. For a moment I could see only blackness, and my head hurt intensely. When I could open my eyes I thought I was in a dream and wanted to wake up. Suddenly the thought came into my mind that I might have been struck. Paralysis was a brief thought that I quickly dismissed. I lay still, because I couldn't move. It felt like my whole body was on novocaine. I saw everyone screaming, and told myself to be calm. I kept repeating to myself, terrified and unbelieving: Oh my God! Oh my God! I found that I could now move, although my legs and feet were still numb.

One of my first concerns was Megan, who was lying still. I thought about doing CPR, but as it turns out she was breathing. Heather was able to come from the counselors tarp to ours, and she started calming people down. She told us to get in lightning position: squatting with our heels together. Some people were still in great pain, others were concerned with those around them. I tried to comfort some people, at first ignoring my shoulder, but later just sitting still. Heather told us to all stay awake, and soon Mike was reading us a story. We were told it would be a long wait. When everyone could move, we decided to travel half a mile to the road.

I got my flashlight and my sweatshirt, and helped Julie limp out. Although we did not have our heavy packs, it was hard to hike in the cold, wet, darkness. We hiked through a stream because it was the fastest way, and soon met up with the paramedics. They had everybody show their wounds and simply dressed mine, to be dealt with later. The six most unscathed walked out first, and Will, Megan and I followed. Those with foot burns were carried out later.

Although we were struck around 9:00 p.m., it was now 11:00 p.m. The volunteers brought us some sheets to keep us warm and dry, and we waited some more. Finally we were moved to a

Suburban with Will and I in front, and Clara and Heather in the back. We had to go very slowly on the bumpy roads, mostly for Clara on the stretcher. We stopped to get some medical forms on our way to the Transylvania Community Hospital. We arrived about 1:00 a.m. The Emergency Room we were brought to was small and quiet. Here they dressed my wounds with ointment (several times) and did all the standard tests. I had to stay in the hospital that night, partly because my EKG was irregular.

I went to sleep on and off that night. The food was pretty good. For breakfast I had bacon, eggs, a chocolate cupcake, and milk. Lunch included stir fry, a roll, applesauce, and milk. In the end there was only one tragedy, the death of Lady Jayd. She was Heather's loyal dog, and was young, fun-loving, and very obedient. She did however, soften the blow for Wrenn, who was resting her head on the dog at the time.

My only burns include my left arm, my right shoulder, my leg, and my left little finger. I consider myself pretty lucky.

End

THE EVENT

PETRIFIED LIGHTNING FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA

A PROJECT BY ALLAN MCCOLLUM

CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY
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