

## Lightning is No Laughing Matter

Even though there is a smile on my face it is because of the fact that I was enjoying the moment on the golf course. This tree was recently struck by lightning close to several houses. Two stories come to mind.

The first one was a summer trip to my uncle's house in Palm Harbor, Florida. His house was on Tarpon Lake and he had a pontoon boat on the ready. We all boarded the boat for an evening on the lake to visit a local restaurant on the other side of the lake. You have to remember that Florida is the number one state in death by lightning strikes. We had been going for about five minutes heading east when we spotted some dark purple, black clouds. Now it is no surprise for a thunderstorm to blow up every afternoon about five o'clock. Then it happened, Ka-boom! My uncle Wendell Burris didn't say anything. He just made a big sweeping turn and headed back where we had come from and parked it. As we were walking into the house he showed me the tips of his fingers. Every finger, including his thumbs had tiny red dots on them. He had been struck by lightning at one time in his life and the dots are where the electricity had come out of his body. The hair on my wife's head was sticking up as we drove back at a quicker pace than we had initially begun.

The other story was a little closer to home. We were fishing right out in the middle of Blue Mountain Lake, just east of Ashley Creek. We were watching a storm go from north to south in the western sky. I watched it go to the south of the lake and proclaimed that we were in the clear. And then I saw something unprecedented in my more than thirty years around the lake. The storm, after watching it travel from north to south made a severe northeastern turn right in our direction. Of course, lightning was striking all the way and we were in an aluminum boat! As soon as I noticed the change of course, I started the motor and floored it. The only thing we had time for was to go up Ashley Creek on a big wake, park the boat on the bank and run to the suburban and jump in. We had survived another close one, whew!

Really, I respect storms and don't take them for granted, ever! I'm glad Greenwood has been proactive and built several safe rooms for the community and the students. An aluminum boat is no place to be when lightning is nearby. As far as I'm concerned, the lake just isn't a safe place to be when storms are in the area. Have you ever seen a tornado go down the river or big body of water? You get my drift? I have witnessed it many times.

By the next issue of The Tradition, JRO should have a major announcement. The hint is to just stay tuned hint, hint. I have been truly blessed to be able to do what I do. Thank you for your support and I can't wait to serve you.