

Epiphany:

A sudden manifestation of the essence or meaning of something. A comprehension or perception of reality by means of a sudden intuitive realization

It was a dark and stormy night as I sat by the radios and listened for anything interesting. The weather was raging with the anger of a typhoon, high wind, heavy rain, hail and high anxiety.

As with most who live in this part of the country I had already unplugged the coax and neatly wrapped then in a water tight bag. They were hung outside the shack on a iron post that is not only driven into the earth a few feet but grounded for a little extra safety from the lightening. Now I'm not sure how well this system of mine will work if I ever take a direct hit, but I do know it beats having nothing.

Lightening is a funny thing, as most of you know it will follow the path of least resistance and it is dead set on eating everything in it's path. This day I unplugged everything and had it hung out the window, we were sitting and watching TV when the phone rang. I know, your thinking, "Don't answer the phone you idiot!" but I did!

We had a couple of near misses and nothing was thought about it by yours truly. The wife got excited and my pups got off the bed and left the room rather quickly. My dad taught me to watch the signs of mother nature many years ago and generally I follow this as a rule for day to day living. This day it never dawned on me that I was about to have a bad day weather wise.

I have everything in my shack grounded, everything! When I felt the jolt pulsate through my body I flung the telephone as though I had been bitten by a snake. With my arm numb and feeling like a blown fuse in the fuse box of life I tried to gain my composure and figure out what had happened. The first thing I remember was my dogs looking at me through the doorway as though they were trying to figure out weather to console me for my obvious distress or come over and hike a leg on me to stop the smoke rolling out of me. (I've still not figured out what part of me the smoke came out of)

When you get an epiphany you tend to know it straight away. For instance, Recently I was weed eating the yard and wondered to close to one of my outside dogs. Did you know when you hit a doggy land mine with one of those souped up straight shaft weed eaters they explode with the force of a cherry bomb in a pop can? Now I'm not talking about the wimpy little cherry bombs you buy on the market today. I'm talking about the ones us older fella's remember that you could get back in the 50's and early 60's.

My god I'm glad my mouth was closed at the time. I have lots of whiskers on my face and thank god they slowed down all the incoming fragments of doggy do. Afterwards my wife came to the door upon hearing all my "special words" I usually reserve for my drunken friends to see what was going on. By the time she got there I was standing in the yard with the only tool I had at the time, a screwdriver, doing my best to defrag

myself. This day I had another epiphany, don't weed eat around the outside dogs, ever!

Any way, back to the lightening. It was not a direct hit, but it seemed to come in on the ground side. It burned a trace across the Diamond sx 200 meter but didn't seem to hurt it otherwise. It killed my big power supply which I miss dearly. I run a Kenwood TS-520-se in the house for an HF rig and it has an outboard digital display which was built by Mike Poole, KB5UUR. May it find more peace in the next life than it found sitting on my shelf looking so impressive.

I now have a cordless phone I plug in and use on those dark and stormy nights in Oklahoma. I have a friend named Heinz, W5UIP in Tulsa that has had a worse experience than myself. He lost some very expensive gear to lightning.

It pays to have some type of protection. There are commercial products on the market that provide some protection, just how well they work I'm not sure. Everything you have must be grounded! It's one thing to lose a little gear, and yet another to lose your house or your life.

My lesson learned? When it comes to lightening, you can never be too safe, and oh yea, watch out for those doggy land mines. You know, my wife made me strip off outside before she let me in the house. My neighbors are still in therapy!

DE W5TAZ