

A Striking Survival Story



Some say that lightning never strikes twice. Tell that to Roy Sullivan. People called him the Human Lightning Rod. He was struck seven times. He lived to tell about it!

Lightning rods are long metal rods. They protect buildings. The top of the rod goes on the roof. The bottom goes in the ground. Lightning is electric. It is more likely to strike metal. When lightning strikes the rod, it goes down the rod into the ground. This saves the building.

Roy Sullivan was born in 1912. He became a park ranger in 1936. He worked in Shenandoah National Park. It is in Virginia. Roy often worked outside. He patrolled the park. He was often outside during storms.

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Roy was first struck by lightning in 1942. There was a thunderstorm. He hid under a lookout tower. The tower was new. It did not yet have a lightning rod. Lightning hit the tower many times. It caught fire.

Roy ran from the flames. He was struck by lightning. It burned a strip along his leg. It hit his toe. It left a hole in his shoe.

Roy had many lightning injuries. Most were burns to his body. His hair caught on fire. His eyebrows and eyelashes burnt off.

Roy holds a world record. It is for the most lightning strikes. Roy began to think that lightning followed him.

Lightning hit Roy for the last time in 1977. It hit him on the top of his head. He was fishing in a small pond. It set his hair on fire. It also burnt his chest and stomach. Roy needed to get to a hospital. He turned around to go to his car. But a bear stood in his way. It wanted fish. He hit the bear with a stick. Then he ran to his car.

Roy died in 1983 at age 71. He is still famous in Shenandoah National Park.

