

220 VOLTS TO MY NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE
by Kenneth Odin Merager

It was the Summer of 1957 at Western Washington College. I was taking an Industrial Arts course called "Tool Maintenance." My partner's and my assignment was to rewire several metal lathes from 110 volts to 220 volts.

My partner and I had crossed the three wires in several patterns using an eighteen inch long screwdriver. This was a test to determine which of the wires was positive and which one was the ground wire. By the time we finished, the screwdriver was melted down to the handle. I then turned off the circuit-breakers and taped a sign over them that read "DO NOT USE!" After I returned to the lathe, we stripped about eight inches of insulation from each of the two positive wires, exposing the copper. We then cut the ground wire eighteen inches shorter and similarly exposed eight inches of copper. As we left we checked the breakers.

The next day we prepared the lathe, junction box, and switch, and worked with each wire individually. We found it necessary to remove about four feet of flexible armored covering that encased the wires. My partner left to go to the far end of the building to get the tool that we needed for this job.

Meanwhile, I completed my work and proceeded to cut the armored covering with a hacksaw at the four foot mark. I was ready to remove the covering. I picked up the two positive wires, held the copper ends in my left hand and raised them up above my head. I grabbed hold of the upper end of the armored covering with my right hand and began to slide the covering up the wires towards my left hand. As the eight inches of bare copper ground wire snapped inside the covering, it happened: all of my muscles tightened and I vibrated to the rhythm of the 220 volts of alternating current surging through my body. Flames flashed from my closed hands...I could not open them. I knew I was caught on the electricity.

I rose six to ten feet above and three to five feet in front of my standing body. I could see the whole area, including dust, scrap paper and wood scraps on top of the cabinets behind my body. Another student, his back to me, was ripping twelve-foot boards of oak on a table saw about fifteen feet in front of my body.

I was not afraid. I realized that my body was not a big hindrance. At the same time, I was still me. Flames continued to flash from my hands. I needed help.

Not wanting to put the student that was sawing in danger, I moved past him and through a multi-paned glass partition into the foundry area. I went up to several students eye-ball to eye-ball, trying to get their attention. They could not see or hear me.

Next, I moved through a concrete block wall with tool panels on the opposite side and into the wood-turning area. Again, I faced a number of students and tried to get their attention. I even waved my hands in front of their faces ... but I do not remember actually seeing my hands. There were about fifty-three people in the combined areas.

Suddenly, I began to move rapidly down a dark tunnel toward a very bright light. I did not touch the sides of the tunnel and was not able to determine how far away from the sides I was. I didn't feel speed--like wind or friction--I didn't feel rushed. There was a musical sound of varying rhythm--similar to portions of the melodies from "Star Wars." It was a mellow sound of contentment.

My life from birth, with all the feelings of each event, passed before me in technicolor. It was as though I was evaluating each experience, yet I did not sense "good" or "bad." I had the feeling of complete understanding of everything I needed to know. However, I was not allowed to bring this knowledge back with me.

I was concerned that if I did not return I would be unable to complete three tasks that day which involved helping other people. I was given the choice of staying or returning to my body. I moved back through the tunnel and away from the bright light to my original position above my standing body. Flames continued to flash from my hands.

Suddenly, I was back inside my body. The electricity stopped flowing. I slid the armored covering back down the wires. The ground wire was burnt off back to the insulation. There were burn holes in the armored covering where my hand had been. The positive wires were scorched where my left hand had been. I looked at my hands. A series of charcoal-filled holes measuring about one-eighth inch wide by one-fourth inch wide and an eighth-inch deep covered the palms of both hands. The burns didn't hurt. I was a little shaky and my back felt as if I had slightly twisted it, but I was all right!

I walked straight to the breaker box, opened the door, and found that the sign, breaker and tape had been pushed to the "ON" position. I was angry.

Before leaving the area I timed the work of the student sawing wood. It took him one-and-a-half minutes to three-and-a-half minutes to run one board through the table saw, which gave me an idea of how long I had been in the current. I also checked the top of the cabinets and confirmed the items I had seen when I was out of my body. "Wow," I thought.

I stopped by the infirmary and told the nurse on duty about the shock. She gave me some cream to rub on the burns and told me I couldn't have lived through such a shock. I felt that if I had not had the burns to show her as proof, she would not have believed my story.

For many years I did not tell anyone about my out-of-body experience. I spent many years searching for a group of people who had had similar experiences. In 1986 I found the Seattle chapter of Friends of IANDS.