

The Catch

COCORAHS - - - WISHING

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, August 28, 2008

Greetings -- CoCoRaHS family, new and old:

If you are new to CoCoRaHS, one of the things we do is send out periodic e-mails. We call them "The Catch" and you can go back and read past messages all the way to 2005 if you so choose.

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=catch>

In our messages, we try to convey useful information about our climate, our measurements, our data and how weather and climate impacts our lives.

The message tonight is a bit different, so I apologize to those of you who are new to this project and are caught off guard. But CoCoRaHS is a "people project" and not just computers and automation. Feelings and emotions are an important part of life and are curiously intertwined with our changing weather.

Tonight I so wish I could write a cheerful message. I wish I could mention the amazing rainfall patterns this past week from Tropical Storm Fay. I wish I could tell you about the snow in Colorado two weeks ago and the thunderstorms in the Pacific Northwest last week. I wish I could tell you about the West Texas rains that quenched a parched drought-stricken land and the wonderful soaking 3" rains we got a few days ago that brought green back to the landscape of eastern Colorado.

Tonight I wish I could enthusiastically tell you how valuable your daily rainfall reports are and how critical your reports of "Hail" and "Intense Precipitation" can be. I wish I could give more examples of how our data reports have been used to issue severe weather warnings, to improve flood forecasts and to predict crop yields. I wish I could suggest ways to keep birds away from your rain gauge. I wish I could tell you the importance of entering 0.00 when you get no rain so that our maps are accurate and your reports are complete. I wish I could take the time to remind you how to measure rainfall to the nearest 0.01" even when the inner cylinder of the gauge is full (1.00" or a tiny bit more).

Tonight I wish I could tell you about our garden and all the beans, tomatoes,

broccoli and squash. I wish I could tell you about how our Great Pyrenees, Angel, treed her first raccoon and protected our ripening sweet corn.

Instead, I have a heavy heart tonight. We've lost something of great value. Odie helped start CoCoRaHS 10 years ago. Odie helped with almost everything we've done at the Colorado Climate Center during the past 30 years. This week, at age 52 and on the 30th anniversary of when she first started work in our office -- and still looking so young and enthusiastic -- Odie died. Just two days earlier she learned that she had cancer. Her last day in the office was last Wednesday before going in for a variety of tests to figure out why she wasn't feeling well. The end came so quickly. Tonight we mourn.

Tonight, I wish this had not happened. I wish tomorrow would be a regular day. I wish there were no funeral this week. I wish Odie was cheerfully sitting at her desk -- in the same office where she's been almost every working day for 30 years. I wish she could greet more visitors and answer more phone calls looking for information about Colorado's Climate. I wish we could prepare more Power Point Presentations, and plan more meetings. I wish we could make more rainfall maps and temperature graphs. I so wish she could help yet another high school student get their first taste of work -- which she did so well for so long. I wish we could talk again, and dream about new plans for CoCoRaHS and the Colorado Climate Center.

We don't always get what we wish, do we. Sometimes we get wonderful days, and great opportunities. At other times we get slugged and dragged around by the occasional woes that go along with living. Tonight, I want to complain bitterly and cry out "It's not fair. Odie didn't deserve this"

No, we don't always get what we wish. Sometimes we get more. I experienced something that is rare these days -- 30 years with a wonderful co-worker who made most days better than they might have been otherwise. We had many years to watch the students from our Department spread their wings and become successful scientists, parents, and even a few grandparents. We had ten years together watching the dream of CoCoRaHS gradually come alive. And all these years we had fun watching the weather, recording the data and sharing information enthusiastically with others.

Today I visited Odie's grieving husband. My grief pales in comparison to his. I dreaded our meeting -- feared the tears and possible anger. The tears did come, but so did a strange sense of peace. We knew we had both shared a special gem and that in ways not understood, she would continue to be part of each of our lives. Afterwards I drove home. It was still our turn for irrigation water on the back pasture, and the animals still needed their daily attention. Work needed to be done whether I felt like it or not. But the air was cool, the grass green, the air

fragrant, (the mosquitoes were terrible, but we'll leave that out of the story). Then as the sun went down, the sky lit up with the orange, pink and purple of a brilliant Colorado sunset. Somehow, things will be OK.

Tonight, I ask you the favor to please not reply to this e-mail. It would be too much for me right now. The exception are those of you nearby who know Odie and may want to find out about funeral arrangements etc.

Goodnight -- and a special thanks to all of you who did rain gauge heroics this past week measuring and reporting the incredible rains from Tropical Storm Fay. There for a while, it was getting to be commonplace to see daily rain amounts over 10". And remember, the most active core of the hurricane season still lies ahead in September. Be ready.

Peace,

Nolan