

*LIGHTNING BOLT  
CREATED RECORD  
MINERAL DISCOVERY*

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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CAMP BLANDING — Many people may not know what it is, but University of Florida researchers have unearthed a record-setting fulgurite.

A whopper of a lightning bolt started a fire that melted soil and created the record fulgurite — a glassy substance described as a solidified lightning bolt.

After months of careful digging, researchers unearthed a two branch fulgurite — one branch nearly 16 feet long and the other 17 feet.

“There isn’t much known about fulgurites,” said Martin Uman, chairman of UF’s electrical and computer engineering department and a team member.



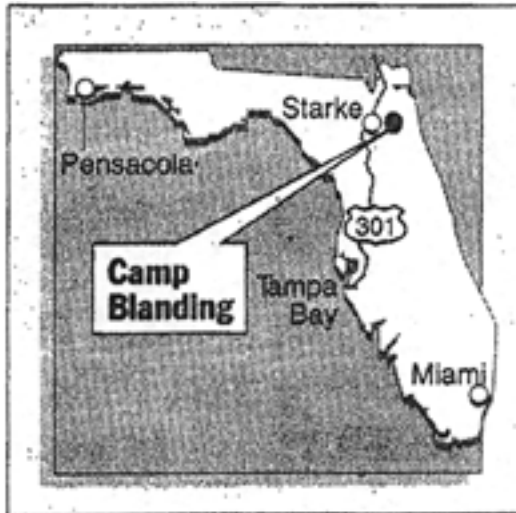
Minerological Research Co.

These small fulgurites, like the 17 foot specimen found by researchers, display the characteristic tubular shape.

Fulgurites are glassy tubes that form below ground when lightning tears through and melts the sand, which cools to form the glassy material.

The UF team’s specimen will be the first entry in the Guinness Book of Records’ fulgurite category. Guinness spent six weeks researching the topic to confirm that the UF discovery is the longest on record. The closest competitor is a 13-foot fulgurite in a museum.

Uman and his team began excavating last summer after a bolt struck the ground at Camp Blanding near Starke, where the university maintains a lightning research facility.



Times art

*THE EVENT*

*PETRIFIED LIGHTNING FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA*

A PROJECT BY ALLAN MCCOLLUM

CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA  
MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY  
TAMPA, FLORIDA