

I was born and raised in Burlington Vermont; the two houses we lived in both had spectacular views to the west, across Lake Champlain to the Adirondack Mountains of northern New York (state). These houses were several hundred feet above the level of the lake itself. In that environment, green flashes were a relatively common experience, as the last rays of the sun disappeared across the mountain ridges, perhaps forty or fifty miles away. I was astonished to find out later in my life that many people did not believe that the phenomenon existed. I have seen Green Flashes occasionally since, from locations that include Fremont Peak and the Space Sciences Laboratory of the University of California (high in the Berkeley Hills -- I spent a lot of time there as a graduate student).

I recall two particularly spectacular green flashes. One was seen from a right-side window in a jetliner headed somewhat south of west, over the great plains. The season was late enough that the sun was setting far enough north of west that I could see the sunset by pressing my face against the window surface and looking obliquely forward. We were moving fast enough that we were almost keeping up with the terminator, so the sunset -- and the green flash -- took uncommonly long times. I recall that the flash lasted for more than ten seconds, and that it was positively emerald in hue. (I've heard it said, rather poetically though probably not factually -- alas -- that the green flash is the last rays of the sun reflecting off the topmost towers of the Emerald City of Oz, far, far away. From this flight, which was not far from Kansas at the time, one could almost believe it.)

The second one was from a rather more mundane location -- Henry Coe State Park. The event was an SJAA outing, in the old days when we used to observe from the hilltop area overlooking the main buildings and campground. I was there with a friend, and we walked down the hill to watch the sun set over the ridge line. I have no idea what caused the unusual meteorological conditions, but the upper limb of the sun went all the way through green to indigo blue before it disappeared. Blue flashes are much less often seen than green ones, so I considered myself very lucky to have seen one.

I went back up the hill to continue setting up my telescope. My friend lingered, watching the stars come out in the

gathering twilight. Venus was prominent low in the west,  
and she watched it set over the same ridge line and yes --  
observed a blue flash off Venus!