

Michael McCormack

Cloud Picture #1

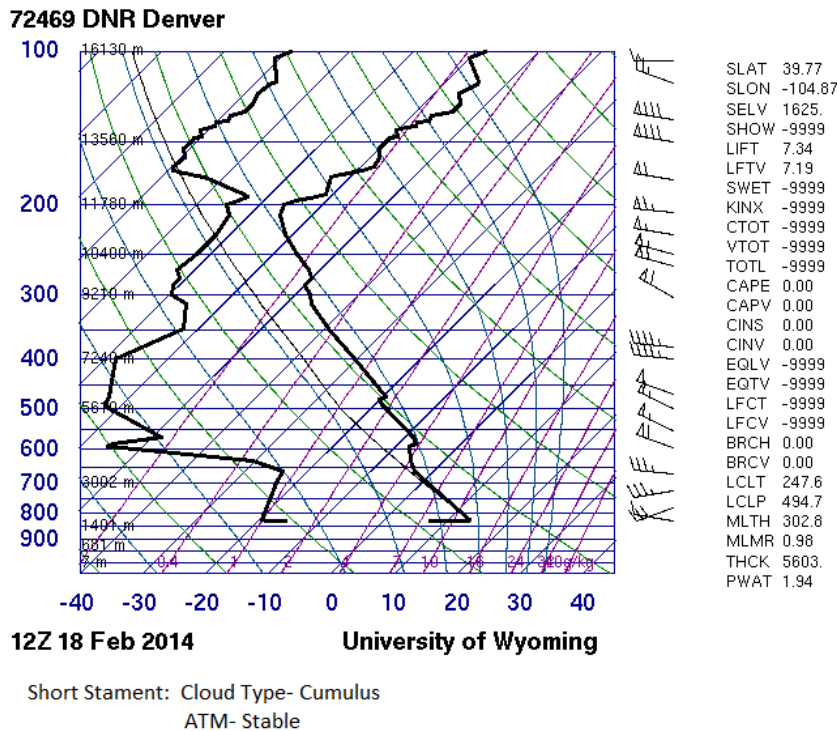


My adventure for the perfect cloud picture took me all the way up to Estes Park, Colorado. The weather that day was nice and the clouds were scattered here and there so I was confident that I was going to come home with something to work with. Nothing really caught my eye as my search took me from Southwest Denver all the way up to Boulder. I felt that perhaps getting further into the mountains might yield a great picture so I headed for Estes Park. Inspired by the great landscapes of my home state Colorado, I got the idea to capture an image of the clouds rolling over the hills. As I got closer and closer to Estes Park I could see a group of thick clouds rolling over the hills west of my position. To my dismay, as I got there, the clouds I was chasing to the west had all but vanished behind the mountains. It did not matter though because I was in Estes Park and I was determined to capture something worthwhile. I drove around a bit and tried to get a good image of the clouds and the landscape but the camera I was working with, the Fuji FinePix S8200, did not allow me to really pinpoint my focus and so these long compositions of the clouds rolling over the hills would constantly come back with parts of it blurred out that I really wanted in the shot. This brings me to my decision to do a photo of just the clouds and the sky. A decision born out of the limitations of the camera I was working with rather than my creative vision. Though sometimes in life one must work with what one has and in this case I am pleased with what I was able to capture.

To get to the precise location where I captured the cloud picture above I had to do a lot of driving. It wasn't that there wasn't any clouds out that day it's just everything I was seeing didn't really seem that interesting or wouldn't work without a camera that allowed for manual zoom. I drove west of the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park and headed for the road leading to the entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park. About 2 miles from the entrance to the park I pulled on the side of the road and this cloud I had been chasing finally rested on my left side, perfect view from the driver side window. I was aiming at about 45 degrees up to the south and the cloud was probably (if I had to guess) about 50 feet in diameter (give or take). It was February 18, 2014 at 12:28 P.M. and as I stated previously it was a

really nice day with scattered clouds. The picture above is just one of many ideas I had that day it was just the only type of composition that I felt this particular Fuji camera was all capable of delivering.

Upon getting this assignment I never really new or retained any information of cloud types and never really thought about clouds from this perspective. As I began to learn a little about different cloud types in my Fluid Dynamics class I began to appreciate the subtle differences in cloud types and the science behind these variations. The cloud image I captured is a great visual representation of a cumulus cloud. I gathered this from the chart that was shown to me in my Flow Visualization class by my professor Jean Hertzberg. When I think of the day I captured the image I can remember it being a little chilly and there were clouds scattered around but it was mostly a sunny day.



Above is a Skew-T plot for Denver during the associated time of the photograph. The CAPE reads zero indicating that on this particular day there was a stable atmosphere.

The end result was not much different than the original photograph. I didn't use any cropping but did adjust the exposure down a little bit and adjusted the colors to bring out the purple in the lens flare. The FUJIFILM FinePix S8200 was set to an aperture of f/13.3 with a shutter speed of 1/1200 sec. The ISO speed was set to ISO-100 and the focal length was at 18 mm. The cameras auto focus didn't allow me to capture my original idea and so I decided to focus on one subject in the frame and use the sky as a backdrop. I also tried to incorporate the sun into the photograph to give the picture a little life. In the end I was happy with what I was able to capture and also inspired to get a DSLR camera that would not hold me back as far as my imagination was concerned.