

OUT OF MY ELEMENT

by Steve Schoppers

Excuse me.....Pardon me.....Sorry.

These words were uttered many times during the day as I weaved, dodged and cut my way through the crowd at the state fair. For an introvert like me, the large crowd is about as far out of my element as I usually get. But today...today was different. I went to see the same things I usually do; the livestock, machinery, and vendors with the merchandise that interested me.

I also went to see the things that my teenage son wanted to see. It was the least I could do as he was walking around the fair with me...not whining or rolling his eyes in his head as teenagers do when spending time with a parent. We made our way to the far corner of the fairgrounds to see the BMX bike demonstrations, the tent with the Rock Band game consoles and to the midway where the carnival workers were hawking the games and rides. It was as if we had crossed over into another world.

My son and I also did something that I never expected either of us to do. (my son is kind of introverted like me) As we stood in line to order our food at the Epiphany Diner, we struck up conversations with fellow fairgoers. What happened next really put me out of my element. As we searched for a place to sit and enjoy our meal, I approached a gentleman sitting by himself. "May we join you for lunch?" I asked. What followed was a half hour of conversation with a complete stranger. There were only three of us sitting at that table, but God's presence was definitely felt there. It was as if God was sitting across the table from me, leading the conversation. As we finished our meals, we thanked each other for the conversation and went our separate ways to enjoy the rest of the fair.

The day wound down into early evening and it was time to leave for home. We made our way to the parking lot so we could catch a bus to take us to where we had parked the car. Being frugal, as well as introverted, I parked at a church which offered free parking and a ride shuttle service to the fair. Even standing on the crowded bus, I felt the presence of God standing next to me. Once again I found myself talking to complete strangers.

As I drove home that night, I reflected on the day I had at the fair. **The day with my son. The day with complete strangers. The day with God. The day out of my element.**

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid. –Psalm 27:1