

The Beauty of Our Square

By Maurice Carter in The Covington News – May 27, 2012

One recent Saturday, I was making my way down Floyd Street, headed to pick up produce from the Porterdale Farmers Market. As I approached the Square, traffic was backed up more than usual at Elm St, and I wondered what could cause such a delay on a Saturday morning. Within sight of the Square, I remembered: today was the Tractor Show and Agriculture Day sponsored by the Newton County Farm Bureau.

Now I suppose I could have felt inconvenienced as I slowly made my way around two sides of the Square and out Washington Street, but there's something about going to a Farmers Market that takes your stress level down a few notches anyway. So, instead, I rolled my window down to better enjoy the sights and sounds of the celebration. One farmer had created a makeshift amusement ride with 55-gallon drums sawed in half, painted to look like cows, being pulled on wheels behind his tractor. The kids seated in the drums were squealing with delight and having the time of their lives.

I had plenty of options to avoid the Square coming home from Porterdale, but I decided to drive through again – once more with windows down – this time slowing to enjoy the sounds of a young man singing country music from the bandstand as festival goers meandered about the Square.

I don't farm, and I don't know enough about tractors to get much enjoyment from seeing them up close. But, I do consider myself an expert when it comes to having a good time, and these folks were doing just that. Witnessing their happiness made me a little happier. It's as simple as that.

Later that afternoon, heading away from town on Floyd St, I was behind a gentleman driving his tractor home from the Square. Mindful of not wanting to seem impatient, I drove slowly a good distance behind and waited until he turned left on Mill Street.

It's a funny concept, the notion that someone or something can be "in my way." Whether we're headed around the corner or across the land, we have this universal idea we can somehow lay claim to everything lying between where we are and the place we want to be. On another day, in a less peaceful frame of mind, I'd have said that man, his tractor, and the entire festival were "in my way."

But, I'm trying to grow beyond thinking that way. And, the more I succeed, the better I feel.

That's the beauty of our Square and the magic that makes it special. A community needs a place where its people come together and share moments of enjoyment. Be it a tractor show,

a cruise in, a concert, a bicycle race, a charity run, a mutt show, or a worship service, these gatherings are about sharing the joy of whatever interest brings attendees together. And, I don't need to have the same enthusiasm for that interest to feel their joy. Sometimes, we can just be happy because others are happy. We don't all have the same specific interests, but we share a common cause in the pursuit of happiness. And, the more I move beyond simply tolerating the needs of others to actually embracing the blissfulness of their enjoyment, the closer I come to finding my own peace of mind.

The sometimes vast space between where I am and where I think I want to be is not inhabited by obstacles. It's filled with life. It's occupied by humanity. And, when we hurry through that space, oblivious or even contemptuous of the surroundings, we rush through our own lives, cut off from our fellow man.

How ironic we lament that "time flies," when it seems pretty clear to me that we're the ones doing the flying.

I often wonder why we're all in such a hurry, and, I really don't know. I'm not immune, I'm only aware of my disease and making a conscious effort to control it.

"I'm supposed to be there already," we often say, when stressing over traffic, a slow driver, a wreck, or some other obstacle "in our way."

Maybe it's just a choice we make, but I've come to accept that where I am is where I'm supposed to be. The "supposed to be" is just what I had in mind before venturing into a world where my way intersects with everyone else's.

Accepting that is one thing. But, true happiness comes from embracing it. And, I can live with that.