

# *Tales of The Chronologically Gifted*

## Adventures, Tales, and Delights of the Sheep and Shepherd Georgia Aquarium - Atlanta, Georgia

*We are ramping up on our fun things to do. We just proved that you can have a grand and rich experience and leave the driving and cooking to someone else. What the Sheep and Shepherd ministry is about is providing fellowship, fun, food, and educational opportunities for our older church members in pleasing and sometimes expansive environments. We were truly in expansive environments this time and ate dinner in the clouds.*

### The Georgia Aquarium

Tuesday morning found fifteen of us convening at 8:45 AM for the easy two hour journey to Atlanta via van. The hardest part of the journey was getting people up and into the back seat of the high riding stretch van, but we did. I promised to build a set of step and cover them with red



carpet for future expeditions that involve high step vans. After an uneventful journey we arrived at the Georgia Aquarium at precisely 11 AM.

The aquarium proved to be lightly attended the day after a holiday and this made the experience far easier and much more pleasant than on those days where 15,000 people are packed into the facility. No waiting for anything. At one point I was in gallery spaces by myself able to enjoy fine jazz music while watching the world swim behind 24 inches of Lexan.

There is something so calming and centering about being in a sapphire blue world where everything moves with such smooth fluidity. Schools of sterling silver species of

diverse types were punctuated by flamboyant species of every conceivable color. Passing through a Lucite tunnel



beneath the 6.5 million gallon main tank reminded me of the tunnels beneath Atlantis in Nassau. The 4,000 pound whale sharks made one pleased to be inside the Lucite tunnel. These fierce looking giants are actually rather harmless, having small throats and being filter feeders of plankton and krill. The coral reef exhibit reminded me of lazily drifting across the face of live reefs in a submarine near Grand Cayman Island. The diversity and color of the species on coral reefs are nothing short of breath taking.



Perhaps the most stunning display is that containing the Pacific Red Jellies. These diaphanous red creatures are a living form of baccarat crystal in a dark rose color. These creatures are so fragile they must be contained in a special tank with no corners or edges. The only things visible in this magnificent tank were the jellies against a diffuse blue background.

The motion of these graceful creatures is hypnotic. A picture is worth a thousand words in this case.

A large collection of fresh water African cichlids reminded of the days when I used to have twelve fish tanks in my dining room where I bred several kinds of cichlids. Public aquariums are good places to recapture happy memories. Dozens of species cavorted. Discus fish of several species hung like giant pendants, regal in their scaled cloaks of brilliant color.



A short film provided an IMAX experience. 3-D glasses, air hoses in the auditorium chairs, water spray from the ceiling, vibration generators in the floor, a powerful sound system, and soap bubble generators made for a very believable submarine experience. After a fishy good time I asked the group if anyone wanted tuna salad. We opted for dinner four blocks away horizontally and on top of the world.



**Dining in the Clouds**

We very easily made it over to the Westin Sundial by 5:15 PM where we made the ascent up the outside of the glass elevators for a majestic view of the city. The only problem was the elevator shafts were completely encased in plywood and the elevator cars had been blacked out. A tornado had blown out the elevator shafts and the glass had not been replaced. We did not have a view going up,

but 750 feet up we exited and found ourselves on top of Atlanta. There is simply nothing like being on top of a city. The dense cloud that persisted all day parted and we ultimately ended up with a fine sunset and a city turning on the lights for us.



We had a rather leisurely dining experience preceded by an hour or so in the lounge, which rotates once every thirty five minutes, affording a panoramic view of the city. We were called when our tables were prepared at 6:15. Our dinner staff was attentive and Kathleen was especially good at sharing pleasant folksy southern conversation with us. It really did seem to matter to her that we had a good experience in the aquarium and in her restaurant. After a leisurely three hours at table for Caesar salad, salmon, crab, steak, chocolate, and other delights we took last glimpses of dusk and descended for the journey home. We transited some torrential rains and arrived back in Anderson at 11 PM.



Next: Reedy River Park for Midsummer Night's Dream and picnic supper. June 12<sup>th</sup>

*Blessings, Craig Johnson*