

## The Rodeo (A Father's Day for the fatherless)

Each summer Evergreen hosts the Evergreen Rodeo on Father's Day Weekend. It is my favorite community event of the year. Bull Riding Friday night, the parade along downtown Evergreen Saturday morning, and some of the top performers and cowboys in the country competing for glory on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.

I love going to the rodeo. As a child I would spend the summer with my grandparents in Walden, CO. My favorite time was getting to go to *The Never Summer Rodeo*. The smells, sights and sounds of an outdoor rodeo are something that every child should experience growing up. I always dreamed I would be the next Rodeo Queen. I was filled with delight when the cowboys let me sit on their prized horse. This is why I thought what a treat it would be to take several of the women and their children from Hands of The Carpenter to the Evergreen Rodeo this past Father's Day Weekend. These are women who have been attending our monthly "gathering group." For whatever reason, their children would not be with their fathers. What better way to spend the afternoon as a child, than on the rodeo grounds – with funnel cakes and corny dogs; the smell of hay and horses; dust and dirt everywhere!

I met the women and their families at Colorado Mills, so that I could lead them "up the hill" to the Evergreen Rodeo Arena. This in itself was an interesting activity! Two of the women are from Africa, and were terrified to drive on the highway, much less up the mountain. After several stops and rearranging of passengers and cars, we made it. The excitement I felt was matched by everyone in our group. The women and children alike had heard of a rodeo, but never attended one. Upon arriving and parking our cars (which itself is a miracle that we got in and out without a small disaster) we walked in – the pre-show was already underway.

After getting settled into our seats, it was a joy to my heart to watch our guests take in everything around them. The pageantry of Rodeo Royalty performing their perfectly timed drills, and the laughter and hilarity of rodeo clowns set the stage for a glorious day. The invocation was given – a relationship with Jesus Christ was shared. Men took off their hats, the audience hushed under the words of the prayer. It was a prayer of salvation – in a public place, on Father's Day, our Heavenly Father was honored. Next came the posting of the colors. As the American Flag is ridden around the arena, the announcer spoke of how great of a country we live in, and expressed gratitude for those who have fought and died for our freedom. The *Star Spangled Banner* is sung by all. There is pride in our patriotism. As I looked at the women I had come with, two of them had tears streaming down their faces. One of the women from Africa proclaims, "This is the country I love. This is my U.S. A." If this was the only reason we had come as a group from Hands of The Carpenter, this was enough.

There was sheer enjoyment for the women and children as they watched the events that followed. Bull riding and calf roping, barrel racing and bare back riding kept us all in suspense and holding our breath! But for me, I think the best part of the day was watching the children – they loved the rodeo as much as I loved the rodeo! They cheered for the cowboys, jumped up and down for the clowns attention, and

“had to have” snow cones and cotton candy. This is what we came for. The noise and the smell and the feel of the rodeo. We all got lost in the day, and forgot for a while that none of us had fathers to celebrate on Father’s Day. We were together, celebrating life and love and laughter and new friends. This is the heart of Hands of The Carpenter. To serve and journey with single parents and widows and their children. To bring hope and support to those in need. Together, we tasted and saw that the Lord is good. He is very, very good.

By the end of the afternoon, we were all tired, dusty and content. One of the boys had gotten a lasso, and had practiced on the other children, much to the audiences delight. He was starting to conquer his new challenge. Another said he was now a “true cowboy” and couldn’t wait to show his friends his new cowboy hat. One of the daughters said she wanted to be the next Rodeo Queen. I knew exactly how she felt. As we got in our cars, and headed each to our own home, I was thankful for the day. Thankful that there is still a place where we can say a prayer in public, and Jesus is proclaimed. Thankful for the smell of hay and horses. Thankful for Hands of The Carpenter for hearing the call of God’s heart to serve “widows and orphans.” Thankful for all of the people who have supported the ministry throughout the years – and the years to come.

See the last page (below) for the pictures we took!



Widows and orphans of our day



Juli enjoying the day with our moms!



Becoming friends!



Practicing in front of a real cowboy!



Practice makes perfect!!



The real deal!



Catching more attention from the professionals!