



Our Bend of the Guadalupe River **by Joe Herring**



Finally, we're entering that time of year when swimming in the Guadalupe River becomes pleasant.

For a fellow who spends most of his waking hours working beside the river in downtown Kerrville, the temptation of sneaking off to go for a swim starts about mid-May, and doesn't leave until the first cold snap in October. It's a temptation to which I've yielded very few times, but each of those times was memorable. Swimming when one is supposed to be working is especially sweet.

I'm not the only one who enjoys swimming in the river in downtown Kerrville. Each time I go there are many others enjoying the water, most close to shore, and many near the dam at the Louise Hays Park. I often go swimming with my son there, in deep section of river between the Sidney Baker Street bridge and the dam. We swim with those floating styrofoam 'noodles,' putting some distance between us and the swimmers by the shore. It's amazing how peaceful a swim can be, even when it's in the heart of busy Kerrville, with trucks and cars passing over the bridge above, and with the sounds of bells coming from downtown.

And swimming there has gone on for many generations. Many of the photos in my collection show folks swimming in that section of water, or beneath the dam. In the 1950s, there were even water ski shows in that part of the river.

The first plunge into the water is always a shock. The water is always colder than I expect.

Swimming toward the center of the river, looking for sunshine, is also cold. But once you escape the shadow of the cypress trees lining the southern bank there, floating in the bright light is very nice.

When it's time to return to shore, and you swim toward the falling sun, the surface of the water takes on a special quality. The color is a deep green, and the water feels soft. The water has a smell, too; it's not an unpleasant smell, but it is a definite signature of that part of the river, a reflection of all of the living things that call the water home.

Perhaps I'll see some of you there this summer.

Until next time, all the best.

Joe Herring Jr. is a Kerrville native.

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