

Guadalupe Adventure

by Verne Wheelwright

Summer on the Guadalupe River in south Texas is tubing time. People come to New Braunfels from all over to float down the Guadalupe in inner tubes. Big inner tubes, from inside truck tires. All along the river, small shops rent the large, inflated inner tubes to tourists and visitors who want to float the river. The rental fee also includes rides back up the river, usually in the back of a truck or an old school bus. Not fancy, just fun. And that's why so many people come here to float the river...it's fun.

Of course the fun is floating in cool water on a hot day, splashing often enough to keep comfortable, looking at all the other floaters in their swim suits, sipping a cold drink, laughing because you're having a good time with friends, and generally enjoying life. Maybe getting too much sun or a little too much beer, but having a good time.

My grandson started floating the Guadalupe with his parents when he was about seven years old, so he was experienced with the floating life and looked forward to at least a few days on the river each year. Now he was out of school and independent. A man!

With two good friends, they rented a camp site, then went to buy groceries. Their grocery budget, to which everyone had contributed, was \$100, with which they bought \$95 worth of beer and \$5 worth of food, mostly potato chips. They locked the beer safely away in the large tool box in the back of my grandson's pickup, except for several six packs of cans that they took with them (no bottles allowed on the river) for a few trips down the river before dark.

Dinner that evening was more beer. My grandson doesn't remember much about that evening, like when he went to sleep, and is not even certain where he slept, because...well, he just doesn't remember. But he's certain he had a good time!

But he does remember waking up, feeling terrible and smelling worse. He couldn't believe he could smell so bad. And he was still feeling the influence of all that beer. He groaned, searched around for a towel and his bar of soap then stumbled off toward the campground showers. That's what he really needed -- a hot shower.

The shower building had a primitive look, as though it had been thrown together with whatever materials were available cheap, but in spite of the general appearance, the showers were great. He'd expected a row of shower heads on a wall, like in the boy's gym at his high school. These were individual showers, plywood stalls with shower curtains. But he wasn't really interested in all that, he just wanted lots of hot water. Which he got. Big shower heads with lots of hot water. The hot water and soap were starting to wash off the effects of yesterday's beer binge, when he heard the voices. Women's voices.

He realized the plywood walls were thin, and there was a big gap between the top of the wall and the ceiling, but he was surprised that the voices sounded clear, not muffled, and they seemed to be getting nearer.. they sounded like they were right beside him.

“Someone’s wearing men’s underwear!”

Panic! That was *his* underwear and shorts! What were these women doing here? Then it hit him. Where was he? Was he in the women’s shower? He must be. “Oh, no! This can’t be happening!”

He didn’t waste time thinking, he acted.

“Ladies,” he called out, “ I’m afraid I’ve made a mistake. I’m in the wrong shower. If you’ll cover up, I’ll grab my stuff and get out. Okay?”

A pause, some whispers, then, “Just a minute!” Another pause. “Okay, we’re covered.”

And they were, one towel each. Grandson only had a closely held wash cloth, but he was quick, out of the shower and into his shorts. Then, he turned and apologized again. They were both young, his age, and very attractive. He didn’t waste time. He was gone. Giggles followed him.

Back on the river, grandson and friends were letting their hangovers slowly fade away, assisted by a little “hair of the dog.” They were all laughing.

“You should have put that wash cloth over your face! They can still ID you!” More laughter.

They were on their second trip down the river that morning when he heard.

“There he is! The guy in the dark gold trunks. That’s the guy that was in the shower!”

He knew the voice before he looked and felt a chill. One of the girls in the shower. They were both there in a cluster of tubes near the shore. It looked like they had a football team with them. Well not that many, but they all looked big. Really big.

Grandson’s buddies sensed trouble and already seemed to be drifting apart from him. Maybe it was just his imagination. He could visualize a running fight down the river. Or an ambush at the landing spot. Not sure what to do, he waved!

From the large cluster of tubes went up a cheer. “Really cool, man! Really cool!” They raised beer cans in a salute.

Laughter followed the two clusters of tubes as they floated on down the Guadalupe.

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