

## THE OBSERVER/ENTERPRISE

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### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Per Year in Coke County ... \$35.00

Per Year Elsewhere in Texas ... \$40.00

Per Year Outside of Texas ... \$45.00

# UPCOMINGS!

## RLISD to host music program

Robert Lee ISD will host a holiday music program on Wednesday, December 13, at 6 pm.

For more information, contact Amber Bosworth at [amber.bosworth@rlisd.net](mailto:amber.bosworth@rlisd.net) or (325) 453-4555.

## Kickapoo Water Board sets election

Coke County Kickapoo Water Control and Improvement District #1 will hold an election on January 9, 2024, for the purpose of electing three directors.

Directors Cody Brosh, Riley Coalson, and Kevin Meeks have filed for re-election.

The election will be held at Bronte City Hall.

For further information concerning the election, contact Clerk Fran Sonnenberg-Oleksiuk by 5 pm on Friday, December 22, 2023.

## Medical expense fundraiser being held

Raffle tickets for a Smith & Wesson 9MM Response are being sold to raise funds for medical expenses for Ken Coalson, who has recently been diagnosed with cancer.

Tickets are available at Bronte Guns & Tackle, Blackburn's Ranch & Hardware Supply, and Bronte Grocery Store. The drawing will be held on December 24 and the winner must meet all federal, state, and local firearm laws.

## End of Year Party slated for December 30

A Eve of New Year's Eve Party will be held on Saturday, December 30, from 8 am until midnight at the Robert Lee Rec Hall. Music will be provided by Coke County's own Backroads West and the event is BYOB (please also bring a snack to share).

manner that would never fit a more genteel gathering. The group seems to be part of the restaurant's fixtures. If the place sold, they would go with it, alongside the worn-out chairs and the ancient ceramic coffee mugs.

Stamford had such a table for most of the last twenty-five years. It reached its zenith at the Cliff House (RIP) in the early to mid-2000s, with at least a dozen regular or semi-regular characters. After that fine establishment closed, it took on new forms at other locales, finally at R&R Restaurant. The cast could have been conceived in some great novel about small town life: a bread man, a schoolteacher, a bus driver, a cattle trader, a railroad engineer, a fire chief, and more. Most cast members were retired or semi-retired. I happened to know the group better than most because my grandfather played the character of the Bread Man. He lived in Haskell, but he started driving 15 miles to Stamford each morning for coffee after a disagreement in a Haskell café over the proper method of cooking breakfast potatoes. Yes, really.

My grandfather passed in 2020 and he was one of the last remaining members of the group. The last of the regulars, the Bus Driver, passed away last week. At the Bus Driver's funeral, I thought about the end of the era and the memories that came with it. After I moved back to Stamford in 2009, I spent more than a few Saturday mornings soaking in the wisdom at The Table. The Cliff House opened at 6 AM. I had the temerity to arrive somewhere around 6 AM, much to the chagrin of the Bread Man and his compatriots. The Bread Man usually arrived closer to 5 AM. After a lifetime of awakening at 3 AM, he saw it as the natural option. Plus, what if the café miraculously opened early? (It

rarely did.) If the Bus Driver did not arrive obnoxiously early, the Bread Man would call him repeatedly before 5:30 AM, accusing him of sleeping until midday.

There are many stories. Most are embargoed under the policy that What Happens at the Cliff House Stays at the Cliff House. However, I do recall one infamous incident. The Table had a tradition of everyone giving a dollar to any attendee celebrating a birthday. I paid in pennies on at least one occasion, because the method of payment was not specified and obnoxiousness was a competitive sport in the group. Several years before I moved home, a casual acquaintance of The Table was celebrating a birthday the next week but he would be away on his birthday. They all gave him a dollar and then he surprisingly passed away before his actual birthday. The conversation that ensued was a real-life version of Tom T. Hall's "Ballad of Forty Dollars." A rule was instituted that a man could only receive his birthday dollar if he achieved the actual birthday itself.

There was something meaningful about the seemingly meaningless small talk. As these men got older, their responsibilities dwindled in work and community, so it was a

valuable source of fellowship and conversation. The verbal jousting sometimes made you wonder if they even liked each other, but it was an opportunity to sharpen their wits. Their stories about days gone by—people they knew, lives they lived, adventures they had—were an act of perpetuating local culture, even if they never called it such. For many years, I was the only attendee under 40. Perhaps local culture was not spread as far as it deserved to be, but I carry with their memories and stories and I like to think I have put them to good use.

In his essay "The Work of Local Culture," Wendell Berry advocates for institutions of local culture, but he does not call for formal institutions sharing a centrally-approved local origin story. Quite the opposite. He expresses the importance of informal gatherings of local people, sharing stories and passing on the culture of a place through the generations. In Berry's Port William fiction, there is a central repository of local culture where people meet to share, cuss, and discuss. It is not a school, library, or other formal facility. It is Jayber Crow's barber shop.

As I reminisce on The Table, I know that this place and this cast will never be replicated. That's okay. It was the proper cultural

## Area Churches

### Invite You to Worship

#### Bronte

##### Bronte Church of Christ

PO Box 346  
118 S. Jefferson • Bronte  
Sun. 10 am & 6 pm, Wed. 7 pm

##### Central Baptist Church

324 S. Franklin • Bronte  
(325) 473-4811

Dale Patterson, Pastor

Sun. 10 am Sunday School  
11 am & 5 pm Worship

##### First Baptist Church

424 S. Washington • Bronte  
(325) 473-2331

[firstbronte@gmail.com](mailto:firstbronte@gmail.com)

Pastor George Cooper  
Sunday 9:45 am Sunday School,  
10:30 am Worship  
Wednesday 6 pm - 8 pm  
Children and Youth

##### Bronte Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes  
Bronte • (325) 650-4836

Pastor Keith Fletcher

Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School  
11:00 am Worship

##### St. James Catholic Church

215 N. Washington, Bronte

(325) 365-2687

Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor

Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am

##### 4C Cowboy Church

Drawer R • Bronte • (325) 895-4080

Robert Lemmond, Pastor

Sunday, 10:30 am - Texas Theater  
Wednesday Bible Study 6 pm -  
4C Feedlot Youth Building

#### Coke County

##### Pecan Baptist

PO Box 542 • 12 miles West of

Robert Lee on Sterling City Hwy

(325) 453-2065, Bill Hood, Pastor

[www.pecanbaptistchurchrl.com](http://www.pecanbaptistchurchrl.com)

Sun. 10 am, Sunday School

11 am & 7 pm, Worship

#### Robert Lee

##### Bible Baptist Church

PO Box 938 • 9th & Austin  
Sunday 10 am Sunday School,  
11 am and 5 pm Worship,  
Wed 5 pm Bible Study

##### Emmanuel Pentecostal

PO Box 794 • 1004 Hillcrest

Pastor Brantly Robertson

(972) 841-2009

Sundays 10 am, Wednesdays 7 pm

##### First Methodist Church

PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne

Pastor Gary Karschner

Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417

Sun. 11 am Worship,

##### Iglesia Bautista Betel

101 Houston • Robert Lee

Sun. 9:45 am • Sunday School

11 am Service • Bible Study Wed. 6 pm

##### Southside Church of Christ

PO Box 698 • 8th & Houston

Robert Lee (325) 453-2176

Sun. 10 am, Sunday School

11 am Worship

Wed. 6 pm, Worship

##### Northside Church of Christ

PO Box 508

9th & Chadbourne • Robert Lee

(325) 453-2685, (325) 763-2118

or (325) 473-1053

Services: Sun. 10 am

##### Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church

601 W. 10th, Robert Lee

(325) 365-2687

Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor

Saturday Vigil Mass 6 pm

##### Robert Lee Baptist Church

PO Box 493 • 22 W. 11th

(325) 453-2724

Chris Walls, Pastor

Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School

11 am Worship

Wed. 6:30 pm, Prayer Meeting

##### Victory Assembly of God

(325) 453-2208, PO Box 638

202 E. 6th Street, Robert Lee

Rev. Rocky Youngblood, Pastor

Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School

10:45 am & 6 pm, Worship

Wed. 6 pm, Bible Study



## The Table

By James M. Decker

You know the table. If you have ever visited a small town café or neighborhood diner at breakfast time, you have seen it. It is a crowd of "regulars." Usually older and mostly male, the crowd has a peculiar cast of characters that fits the locale.

The restaurant staff knows them well. If you wander within earshot, you might hear them haranguing one another in a

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# Emergency Siren Signals

## Cities of both Bronte and Robert Lee

1 Long Ring - Wind Advisory over 60 mph

2 Rings - Fire or VFD Meeting

Another 2 Ring - Call for Additional Firefighters

3 Rings - Tornado Warning

1 Long Continuous Ring - All Clear for Tornado

