

THE OBSERVER/ENTERPRISE

Published Weekly

The Observer/Enterprise, LLC

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www.ObserverEnterprise.com

Periodical Rate Postage paid at Robert Lee, Texas

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to
Observer/Enterprise

PO Box 1329, Robert Lee, Texas 76945

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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

Death Notices

Thompson

Dale Gibson Thompson died in San Angelo, Texas Monday, April 3, 2023, at the age of 100.

Dale is survived by his wife, Leni; children, Marvin and wife LaNette and their children, Michelle and husband Shad Spannagel, and their children, Hannah, Haven, and Hailey; Laura and husband Phil Barnes and their children, Daniel and Jonathon; Troy Thompson and wife Heather and their children, Ryan and Alex; Manfred and wife Lana and their children, Jason (deceased), Joe Don Thompson and wife Amanda and their children, Georgia and Finley; Amber and husband Andrew Wiseheart and their children, Lincoln and Fox; Donnie and wife Dee Anna

Percifull (deceased) and their children, Christopher (deceased), Jon Thompson and wife Christie and their children, Ryder and Blake; Scott Thompson and daughter Davy; Kara and husband Bogdan Stanei and their children, Everett and Evan; Norma and her daughter, Jennifer and husband Lance Hobbs and their children, Harleigh and Bentley; Marla Percifull and her children, Jared Percifull and wife Chrissie and their children Boston (deceased) and Braylin; Jacob Percifull and wife Adair and their children Graham and Dylan; and Joseph Percifull.

Visitation for friends and family was from 6 pm to 8 pm, on Thursday, April 6, 2023, at Harper Funeral Home in San Angelo, Texas. Graveside services were led by Rev. Ryan Buck of Immanuel Baptist Church at 2 pm, Friday, April 7, 2023, at Fairview Cemetery in Bronte.

impossible to distinguish myth from reality in cowboy lore. The idea of the cowboy began in truth, but the fiction of the cowboy began to influence the truth. Early cowboys like Wyatt Earp influenced cowboy film stars and filmmakers like Tom

Mix and John Ford and their movies subsequently influenced generations of cowboys henceforth, and so on.

I am grateful that the cowboy has influenced our culture, but I am also troubled. There is much positive in the cowboy story, but our society has taken some of the wrong lessons from the cowboy story or perverted the mythology altogether to serve other purposes.

I do not set out to author a comprehensive list of these problems, because I have neither the space nor the qualifications to do so, but let's start with familiar territory. In the character of Ethan Edwards in "The Searchers," we see the vision of the rugged individualist, tough and alone. The concept of toughness is all well and good, but it can also be actively toxic to our relationships and our mental and physical health. Sayings like "cowboy up" can be perfectly positive when used correctly. There's a spirit of preserving through adversity that we all need and that we should all learn from our forefathers on the frontier. It is not okay to use this spirit to encourage people to disregard their physical health (injured "rub some dirt on it") or mental health ("feelings are for sisses). There is a direct through line between this mentality and people who end up with lifelong injuries at an early age or worse, the disturbing rate of substance abuse and suicide in rural America, particularly among males and particularly when times get hard. Sometimes, cowboying up is not enough.

There's also an old saying "all hat and no cattle" that is meant to describe someone who is more show than substance. Weirdly, it feels like this has become a manner in which people gatekeep the western

lifestyle or rural life in general. If you don't look the part, then there are some who do not take you seriously. There are men and women who epitomize the positive qualities of the frontier and either do not own a cowboy hat or could not care less about what their hat looks like. On the flip side, more than a few people have gotten elected to political office based on little more than their ability to look good in a hat (I'll not name names).

In the fall of 2022, my friend Ed Roberson hosted "Stories From Around the Campfire," a conversation with some of the finest members of the Cowboy Artists of America (you can find it on his Mountain and Prairie podcast feed). In that discussion, the great cowboy poet Red Steagall observed that society periodically gets tired of tinsel and shiny objects and wants to feel leather and oak wood again. He's right. To those of us who appreciate the cowboy, we should do the same and focus on the real, authentic aspects of cowboy culture and not the distracting shiny aspects like looking good in a hat or toxic toughness.

It doesn't matter what the cowboy looks like. It doesn't matter whether the hat is worn by man or woman, not at all, or (gasp!) if the wrong type of hat is worn in the wrong season. Our substance defines us as humans. The substance of the cowboy is one of hard work, resolve in the face of adversity, taking care of

ourselves and one another, and being a positive contributor to home and community.

May we remember that. Long live the cowboy!

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and podcast. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to West of 98 wherever podcasts are found.

Catfish stocking arrives at Neighborhood Fishin' Lakes

Spring is here and that means catfish angling is back at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) Neighborhood Fishin' lakes across the state. The program provides an opportunity for friends and families to participate in the Texas traditions of outdoor recreation by reeling in catfish close to home.

The week of April 14, TPWD will start stocking thousands of catfish at 18 Neighborhood Fishin' lakes, including five in Dallas-Fort Worth, four in the Houston area, two each in Austin and San Antonio, and one each in Amarillo, College Station, San Angelo, Waco and Wichita Falls.

"Neighborhood Fishin' lakes are conveniently located in urban and suburban areas so that Texans don't have to travel far to have a great experience," said Craig Bonds, director of Inland Fisheries.

(Continued on page 8)

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

First United Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes
Bronte • (325) 650-4836
Sun. 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
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 United Methodist Church

PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne
Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417
Cyndi Weidner, Pastor

Sun. 10 am Sunday School
11 am Worship,
5 pm Choir Practice

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
Recardo Reyes, Preacher

Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
11 am & 6 pm, 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 & 7 pm, Worship
Wed. 7 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

sweet endings
to a
new
beginning

Join us to wish farewell to

Recardo Reyes

SUNDAY APRIL 30, 2PM-4PM

Robert Lee Recreation Hall
170 Park Rd. Robert Lee, TX

Hosted by Southside Church of Christ

American Idol Finale

By James M. Decker

The myth of the cowboy grew purer every year because there were so few actual cowboys left to contradict it. - Larry McMurtry, 1989 (Preface to "In a Narrow Grave: Essays on Texas")

Why did I spend the last month winding my way through the story of the cowboy in film and literature? This wasn't a self-indulgent opportunity to talk about some of my favorite fiction. Well, it wasn't JUST that.

As I consider the concept of community, I have thought deeply about the forces and influences that shape that concept, particularly within the rural context. For reasons fairly evident, the American cowboy is unquestionably a heavy influence on rural community, rural people, and how we perceive ourselves and one another. As the late great Larry McMurtry observes in the quote above, it is all but