



**Training!** Members of the Bronte Volunteer Fire Department recently held a CPR training class. The training was provided to help the BVFD members to care for the citizens of Coke County.



**Birthday Party!** The Coke County 4-H Club recently hosted the April birthday party for residents at the Robert Lee Care Center.

visions of the hippies with flowers in their hair swaying to Janis Joplin. That was the example of a counterculture in a specific period of time, but it is not the only example of counterculture.

In fact, the idea of counterculture is much more general and mundane than the emotionally charged 1960s. Webster defines it as “a culture with values and mores that run counter to those of established society.” Depending on the terms of established society, counterculture can be very wild and adventurous, or it can be very simple. Either way, it is a radical departure.

In the Year of Our Lord 2023, you know what qualifies as counterculture?

Community. Simplicity. Localism. Limits.

Last weekend, my wife and I found ourselves in Oklahoma City. Let me first say that Oklahoma City is deeply underrated in the pantheon of

American cities. If you’ve never visited, and if you have a stereotyped view of the place, you’d be surprised how interesting, beautiful, and complex it is. This is not Oklahoma City travel propaganda, just a hearty endorsement of it. Among our stops was Commonplace Books, an independent bookstore in Midtown that lured me in with a Wendell Berry quote on the window. At that point, I had no hope to control myself. I walked away with two Wendell Berry titles that I did not already own, James Rebank’s “Pastoral Song” about farming in the UK, and Thomas Merton’s “New Seeds of Contemplation.” So indeed, I did not even attempt to control myself.

As we checked out, I discussed the merits of independent bookstores with the cashier and she praised Bookshop.org. I have used Bookshop for a while, after I discovered its business model. Bookshop gives back a portion of its proceeds to independent

bookstores, and their website allows the online shopper to designate the bookstore that receives the shopper’s contributions. In my experience, Bookshop has every book you might otherwise buy from Amazon and it allows a person to shop online with a more beneficial purpose than being forced into Amazon’s “buy cheap, buy fast, destroy the retail economy” model.

My friend Hadden Turner writes Over the Field, an agrarian newsletter from across the pond in the UK. A while back, he wrote an essay entitled “To Buy Is to Give.” I encourage you to look up his newsletter and read the full essay, but in short, Hadden observes that buying well is a form of giving. In addition to our charitable giving and our church tithes, Hadden writes, “we are meant to steward ALL of our resources and finances well, for the good of ourselves and our neighbours - and we do

this when we spend our money well by buying well.” Buying well impacts our life, the lives of folks around us, and the lives of the people from whom we choose to buy or not buy. Choosing Amazon over a local business has its consequences. Buying well, even if it takes a few extra days or costs a dollar more, has positive consequences.

I had wondered whether the Bookshop contribution was negligible to the local retailers. Many clever-sounding charitable stunts can be just that. They are more flash than substance. They grab some good PR, but the actual impact is negligible. This weekend, I learned that Bookshop purchases truly matter to local bookstores.

I’m about to embark on a

radical series of discussions about the counterculture of community, simplicity, localism, and limits, so buckle in. In the meantime, consider that buying well is a form of giving. I have many charitably-minded and kind-hearted readers, so I encourage each of you to extend your worldview to your purchases as well. You impact the world for good or bad with how you spend your money, what you purchase, and where you purchase it from. Buy well. It matters.

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](http://westof98.substack.com) and subscribe to West of 98 wherever podcasts are found.



## BRONTE SENIOR CLASS OF 2023

The First National Bank in Bronte has an account for the Bronte ISD Graduating Class of 2023.

You can make a monetary gift to the Seniors of your choice. A cashiers check will be given to each Graduate along with a list of those whom contributed to them.

Thank You for your generosity. We are thankful to be part of this amazing community.

# WHERE your needs matter!

Yes, right here! We are here to assist you with your financial assets and show you how our banking services can work for you. Come by and talk to us about saving. Certificates of Deposit, loans, and much more. You’ll be glad you did!  
For your future, we’re your bank!



## Robert Lee State Bank

621 Austin Street Robert Lee, Texas

453-2545

MEMBER FDIC



IT’S OUR PLEASURE TO  
SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY!