



Well nobody is gonna miss me
 No tears will fall, no one's gonna weep
 When I hit that road.
 My boots are broken, my brain is sore
 From keeping up with their little world,
 I got a heavy load.
 Gonna leave 'em on just like before, I'm big city bound.
 You're always seventeen in your hometown.
 Happiness awaits in the big city. Or so he thinks. At the very least, it's an escape from what seems to ail him in his hometown.



Cooking School! *Healthy Texans was the theme for this year's Bronte Cooking School. There were 35 elementary and junior high kiddos that had the opportunity to be creative in the kitchen. The three day program instilled in each participant the importance of healthy eating, food safety, kitchen safety, and spending time with family.*

There was a period in my adult life where I believed you ARE always seventeen in your hometown. I theorized that this could be a good or bad thing, depending your experiences. As I've aged, I no longer agree with that theory. We do not have full agency over our life and the circumstances that create our reputation at that age. We also have limited control as to how others in town perceive us. Is that fair? Well, life is not fair. But is it true? If others view us as rowdy, a slacker, a nerd, or a goody two-shoes at age seventeen, are we committed (or doomed, as it were) to that perception forever?

person to feel branded as a perpetual teenager. Last week, I proposed embracing our youth and encouraging them to live life to the fullest right here in our rural places. They cannot (and mostly will not) do that if they cannot escape their perception at age seventeen. Instead, they'll be big city bound just like Cody Canada's disaffected narrator, and the local population will continue to dwindle.

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podcasts. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to him wherever

podcasts are found. Check out the West of 98 Bookstore with book lists for essential reads here.

I know people who have worked hard to overcome their teenage perception. Some have succeeded. Others have struggled. Why? Perhaps, the answer does not actually lie within us.
 After two decades, I have my answer. Whether we are always seventeen in our hometown is ultimately the decision of a community. People may not realize they have this collective impact, but they do. Will they forever view us through the prism of a teenager they once knew, for good or bad? Or will they allow their perception to be supplemented by the adult that we become? It's their choice.
 This is a heavy theory. It places a burden on each of us to treat others and successive generations with kindness and understanding, lest we cause a

Are you always seventeen in your hometown? Only if the community treats you that way. Living with a true sense of community, we can and should see people for who they are, not who they once were. We are complex, growing, and changing humans. We each have unique perspectives at every stage of life. Some eras in our lives are better than others. We can and should be encouraged to overcome our struggles. And at each stage, we are worthy of influencing our place and community for the good.
James Decker is the Mayor

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