

baiting, and fish removal. Participants are welcome to take their catch home. Prizes will be awarded for biggest fish, biggest bag, etc.

Bronte Kid Fish is now a non-profit organization and is accepting donations to help with this event. Donations can be made at Bronte Guns and Tackle at 103 W. Main St. or at PO Box 151, Bronte, Texas 76933. Tax deductible donation forms available upon request. Bronte Kid Fish board of directors are Dan Waddell, president; Tim Smith, vice-president; and Jennifer Addona, treasurer/secretary.

**Bronteoberfest slated for October 19**

The 10th annual Bronteoberfest will be held on Saturday, October 19, at the park in Bronte.

The event will have a variety of activities including shopping, live music, the much loved wiener dog races, and much more.

Live music concerts will begin at 6 pm with Coke County's own Kickapoo Creek Band, as well as local favorite McGinn of Dolly Shine fame. The headliner for this year's event is Cory Morrow.

Registration is now open for cook off teams, vendors, and food trucks. This can be done online at [www.restoringbrontefoundation.org](http://www.restoringbrontefoundation.org).

More information about Bronteoberfest will be available in the upcoming weeks.



**Rebuilding Local Culture**

By James M. Decker

What does it take to actually rebuild local culture? Why does that matter?

As I wrote last week, I consider Wendell Berry's "The Work of Local Culture" to be one of the single most influential works in my own life and worldview. I would encourage any of my readers to take the time to read that essay. I have read it at least a dozen times in full and I continue to learn from it each time.

A thriving local culture centers around, well, the local. Berry uses the country tradition of "sitting till bedtime" with friends, neighbors, and kinsmen, as his example, but why did that matter? It wasn't just the act of sitting on a porch or in a yard that made this tradition so meaningful. There was no single "correct" way to do it. There are undoubtedly as many variations on the tradition as there are people who partook in it. Whatever those variations might be, the core value was the same:

people spending time together in an enjoyable manner. They strengthened the bonds of human relationships and community by focusing on their shared life and place, rather than looking wistfully off into the distance.

As strong local culture faces inward. It does not do so because it is too dumb or narrow-minded to look outward. In fact, it is quite the opposite. A strong local culture faces inward precisely because of a satisfaction with the life and culture that is created and lived by the people in their place. The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh (previously quoted in my newsletter on several occasions) differentiates the parochial (local) culture as "never in any doubt about the social and artistic validity of his parish. All great civilizations are based on parochialism -Greek, Israelite, English."

Kavanagh contrasts the parochial with the provincial: "[t]he provincial has no mind of his own; he does not trust what his eyes see until he has heard what the metropolis - towards which his eyes are turned -has to say on any subject."

Which brings me to the television. In his essay, Berry points to the television as a significant destructor of local culture: "[b]y television and other public means, we are encouraged to imagine that we are far advanced beyond sitting till bedtime with the neighbors on a Kentucky ridgetop, and indeed beyond anything we ever were before."

He's not wrong. These are not merely the cranky views of a Kentucky poet living on his farm without the "modern" conveniences that the rest of the world took as necessities. No, Wendell Berry wrote these words in about 1990, and three and one-half decades later, he's only been proven more correct. I have watched a lot of television in my life, much that I regret and some that I do not, but I

cannot deny that television deeply influences a culture. It has shaped culture since its earliest days of becoming a shared cultural experience. I do not just mean funny catchphrases and clever references that move from a show like "Seinfeld" into the daily lexicon. Television does that, but television also sets the boundaries around what is permitted to be acceptable within a culture. Certainly, there are television and media executives who push their own hobby horses. But most often, television is shaped by the people who make it profitable, the advertisers.

In his recent book "Silent Spring Revolution," the great historian and author Douglas Brinkley details Rachel Carson's work in studying the dangers of the chemical DDT. Carson's efforts to detail these dangers with a television news special were made more difficult by advertisers who did not want such uncomfortable content appearing in between their commercials. After all, that's what television is: content that's placed between the real feature, the commercials. The timeline was a bit dramatized in the 2022 film "Elvis,"but it is correct that the content of Elvis Presley's famous 1968 "Comeback Special" was impacted by the NBC advertisers sponsoring the show. Simply put, for the last 60+ years, advertisers have had an outsized ability to determine our culture, for better or worse. And in the case of rural America, it has unquestionably been worse.

Let us not forget the infamous "Rural Purge" by CBS in 1970 and 1971, when popular shows like "Green Acres," "Petticoat Junction," "Mayberry R.F.D.," and "The Beverly Hillbillies" were canceled. CBS and its advertisers decided that marketing to urban and suburban audiences was now more desirable. They simply decided that rural life was no

longer welcome on their television network. If you do not think that created a negative stigma around rural life for American society, among generations of people who saw rural life canceled on their television screens, well, Mr. Haney from "Green Acres" has a magic elixir that he would like to sell you.

Television builds Kavanagh's provincialism into our culture. Instead of appreciating the social and artistic validity of our own place, we are told to look towards the metropolis and let it shape our opinions. Berry writes, [m]ore and more country people, like city people, allow their economic and social standards to be set by television and salesmen and outside experts. Our garbage mingles with New Jersey garbage in our local landfill, and it would be hard to tell which is which."

Television told us rural life was outdated. We believed it. We dispensed with our own local culture and began looking wistfully towards the metropolis for our opinions and our ways of life. Why even live in a rural place if it's just a low-rent version of the better culture in that metropolis?

And that's before we even get to the internet and social media. But that's for next week. In the meantime, look inwards, friends. Our local cultures are more worthy than the advertisers want you to believe.

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and the Rural Church and State and West of 98 podcasts. Contact

James and subscribe to these essays at [westof98.substack.com](http://westof98.substack.com) and subscribe to him wherever podcasts are found.

**Robert Lee Cemetery Memorials**

- Kenneth and Kay Lackey**  
David and Myra Brooks
- Slim Brooks**  
Mike Wade
- Dale Brown Family**  
Marsha Porter
- F.P. Brown Family**  
Marsha Porter
- John Brown Family**  
Marsha Porter
- Burgess Family**  
Lynne Sinclair
- Frank and Ruby Hearn**  
Larry and Patti Hearn
- Meek Family**  
Lynne Sinclair
- W.W. and Louise Paul**  
Larry and Jane Paul
- Jesse A. and Betty June Saunders**  
J.S. (Sid) Saunders
- Ed and Daisy Trimble**  
Monty and Vicki Trimble
- John Hill Warren**  
Devony Duhe
- Wiginton Family**  
Mary Hollis
- Victor and Ronda Wojtek**  
Monty and Vicki Trimble
- Wojtek Family**  
Mary Hollis

**Stuff from the Pastor**

This Friday the World Olympics will begin in Paris, France. Ever since I watched the '72 Munich Olympics and saw how just a few could disrupt so many, I have always offered prayers for safety of the athletes and attendees at the games. I do this for events of all sizes.

(Continued on page 6)

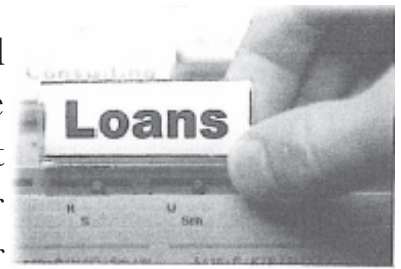
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