

one mention ("The Work of Local Culture," "The Unsettling of America," "The Total Economy," "Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer," and "In Distrust of Movements," just to name a few offhand). There are a core group of poems that are particularly meaningful to me that are worth mentioning.

Berry has written a series of poems based on a character called the "Mad Farmer." They're written from the perspective of a farmer who is, well, mad. He's mad about the state of the world and the mixed-up priorities and greed that got us here. The Mad Farmer can be simultaneously angry, poignant, and funny in his poems.

"Manifesto: the Mad Farmer Liberation Front" is perhaps my single favorite poem ever written. It is brilliant and powerful. The satire can make your head spin until recognize it for what it is. About halfway through the poem, there is a particular stanza that hits me hard each time:

Invest in the millennium.  
Plant sequoias.

Say that your main crop is the forest

that you did not plant,  
that you will not live to harvest.

Plant sequoias.

What a sentence. As you likely know, sequoias are the largest trees in the world. There is no other tree like them on earth. I remember seeing them in person at Yosemite National Park when I was about ten years old and I was awestruck by the sight of them. They also grow very slowly, among the slowest-growing trees on earth. A sequoia takes upwards of 50 years to reach its mature height. The sequoia groves in California contain trees that are upwards of 3,000 years old!

A man doesn't plant sequoias so that he can watch them grow to their final form. He plants them because it is a good thing to do that and it will leave the world better as a result.

Wendell Berry turned 90 years old on Monday, August 5.4 He has spent many of those years planting sequoias of the metaphorical kind. As Berry reached his formative years, American society was firmly snubbing its nose at rural culture and agricultural policymakers were doing their dead-level best to empty out rural America. That did not dissuade Berry. He embarked on a career that now spans seven decades, writing from his Kentucky farm about good and decent things: stewardship of the land, care and concern for all of God's creatures, loving one's neighbor, and living within community. He wrote about these things, and he still writes, because it is a good thing to do and it leaves the world better as a result

When Berry wrote "The Unsettling of America" in 1977, he took a blowtorch to the ideas propagated by the



**Golf Tournament!** Robert Lee's annual Parent/Child Golf Tournament was held on Thursday, August 8, at Mountain Creek Golf Course. Taking first place was Jason, Jaxon, and Ryder Tavarez with Aaron Hood and Brenner Sherwood following in second place. Rounding out the top three was Lee McCown and Max Garcia.

most powerful interests in American agricultural policy. He fearlessly named names and gave specific criticisms. I don't imagine it got him on any Christmas card lists in the major centers of power. He wrote with a sense of urgency and a hope that people would listen. He also wrote with an awareness that his ideas went against the grain and that people might not want to listen. In the decades since its publication, American policymakers have indeed struggled to heed Berry's words. Even so, his concerns about the

fate of American agriculture and rural communities have been almost entirely vindicated. There are many of us in the generations after Berry whose own work is informed and influenced by his ideas.

Wendell Berry has planted the sequoias for seven decades. It has taken that long for some of his ideas to take root. It may take another seven decades for other ideas of his to finally change American agricultural policy. More than a few of us are working to take up his mantle where we can. We write

and we work in hopes that we, too, will cause a small spark that impacts others and changes rural America for the better. We may see some of the results. We may not. Our ideas may not take hold until long after we are gone. That makes our ideas no less worthwhile, even if society says otherwise.

Planting sequoias is not an easy thing to do. We live in a results-oriented society. How fast did your business grow? How many new jobs did you create in your community? Did you increase the yield of crops in

your field? Did your church save more souls this year than last? We do not know how to think about things that we cannot measure.

Planting trees that might take fifty years to reach maturity and a thousand years to reach their majesty? Why would you waste your time on that? Because it is a good thing to do. There are sequoias planted today in parts of the United States and Europe that are enjoyed for their beauty because of the foresight of the people who planted them 100 or 150 years ago.

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## SALARIES FOR COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS SET BY COURT

(beginning October 1, 2024, previous fiscal year - includes Longevity)

NAME	2023-24 SALARY	PROPOSED 2024-25 SALARY
Hal Spain, County Judge	\$39,607.08	\$41,608.44
Hal Spain, State Supplement	\$25,200.00	\$25,200.00
Donald Robertson, Commissioner, Precinct 1	\$40,111.72	\$42,156.32
Henry Chisholm, Commissioner, Precinct 2	\$39,691.72	\$41,676.32
Marshall Millican, Commissioner, Precinct 3	\$40,711.72	\$42,756.32
George Ray Sparks, Commissioner, Precinct 4	\$39,691.72	\$41,676.32
Nick Arrott, County Attorney	\$38,130.77	\$40,076.32
Nick Arrott, State Supplement	\$25,665.84	\$25,665.84
Gina Williams, Tax Assessor/Collector	\$38,900.77	\$39,816.32
Wayne McCutchen, Sheriff	\$50,721.11	\$53,211.42
Wayne McCutchen (MHMR Grant)	\$ 3,252.84	\$ 3,252.84
Wayne McCutchen (Law Enforcement Grant)	\$24,278.88	\$25,000.00*
Jennifer Burdett, County & District Clerk	\$38,010.77	\$39,956.32
Therese Emert, County Treasurer	\$38,010.77	\$39,956.32
<b>JPs and CONSTABLES</b>		
Russell Johnson, JP Precinct 1	\$38,305.77	\$40,251.32
Marty Boyd, Constable, Precinct 1	\$21,599.54	\$22,682.52

*\*Dependent upon continued funding.*