

# THE OBSERVER/ENTERPRISE

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## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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of jokes. In another town, I might have that kind of coach. Instead, Stamford ISD had men like Johnny Garcia, Casey Pearce, the late legend Bill Anderson, and Eddie Richardson (among others) who spent my entire athletic career encouraging me even when I finished last, because I still finished. In the story of the tortoise and the hare, the experience of the tortoise resonated with me.

Last year at the Strenuous Life Retreat, I did not finish the hiking excursions. I made both hikes part of the way, but I turned back before I reached the end. I personally vowed that I would come back this year and complete both hikes. Over the last 11 months, I did not train as much as I intended, but I undoubtedly got myself in better shape. Swapping 90% of your television-watching for gardening will do that, as will kayaking, better running shoes (Team HOKA) and a few other life changes.

This year's hikes were the same as last year: a seven-mile roundtrip from Great Sand Dunes National Park up to Mosca Pass and a 10-miler along Zapata Creek to the alpine Zapata Lake and back. 17 miles of hiking in two forays is a challenge on any course, but Stamford sits at approximately 1,600 feet above sea level and these hikes start above 7,000 feet. Mosca Pass requires about 1,600 feet in elevation climb, while the Zapata Lake trail starts at 9,000 feet and peaks at 12,000 feet. Hiking uphill at high elevation will tax you in a manner that you cannot replicate in the lowlands.

And I did it, dadgummit. I brought up the rear both times, but the Strenuous Life Retreat is about a group of people pushing themselves together, not competing to finish first. I'll not lie to you. There were a few times on the Zapata Lake Trail where I questioned whether I could finish, but I was too far in to quit. When I crossed over the

last rise and saw the lake in front of me, it was one of the most rewarding feelings of my life. The sandwich I ate on the lake shore rivaled any sandwich I have ever eaten (and we all know that sandwiches taste better outdoors). I might have wanted to luxuriate in the accomplishment, but I still had to hike 5 miles back down the mountain to the trailhead.

This essay is not about rural revitalization. Or maybe it is. Rural revitalization is hard. I hear far too often that rural America is beyond saving. It would be a lot easier to pack it in and move to the suburbs where the infrastructure is new and the chain restaurants abound. But we can do hard

things in life. And we should. I will write more about this next week, but the entire concept of Theodore Roosevelt's "The Strenuous Life" speech is that challenging ourselves will make us better humans and make the world better.

Revitalizing rural communities is a challenge. But if I, of all people, can hike uphill in the thin mountain air for miles on end, then frankly, anything is possible.

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 and subscribe to him wherever podcasts are found.

## WCCHD board meeting minutes told

By Pat Stephens

The Board of Directors of the West Coke County Hospital District convened August 29, 2023, in the Board Conference Room for the annual hearing on the budget and tax rate.

President Beverly Burdett called the meeting to order at 9 am and declared a quorum was present. Roger Alexander gave the invocation. Board members present were Betty Lewis, Pat Stephens, Roma McCarley and Noel Tinkler. Houston McGuire, Administrator, Roger Alexander, Janie Munoz, and Lyza Frasco, were also present at

the meeting. There were no visitors.

The budget and tax rate were discussed. There was no action taken. The meeting adjourned and went directly into regular session at 9:30 am.

Upon entering regular session, the budget was accepted, with line item changes, and the tax rate was set at 0.00234.

The minutes of the previous meetings for July 25 and August 14 were approved, and absent Board member Noel Tinkler was excused from the July 25 meeting.

The administrator gave the

## 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

#### Bronte Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes  
Bronte • (325) 650-4836  
Pastor Keith Fletcher  
Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School  
11:00 am Worship

#### St. James Catholic Church

215 N. Washington, Bronte  
(325) 365-2687  
Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor  
Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am

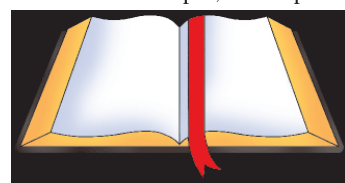
#### 4C Cowboy Church

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 Methodist Church

PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne  
Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417  
Sun. 10 am Sunday School  
11 am Worship,

#### 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  
Sun. 10 am, Sunday School  
11 am 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 Worship

#### Wed. 6:30 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

## Obituaries



### Wilkes

Jerry was born November 22, 1936, in Alpine, Texas, the fourth son of seven boys, to C.T. and Ruth Derrick Wilkes. He graduated from Colorado City High School in 1955. He attended San Angelo College and Sul Ross University for several semesters but was drafted into the Army in 1959 and served 2 years 9 months. In 1962, Jerry went to work for Union Texas Petroleum and worked for 31 years and continued to work in the oil

field for several more years. He partnered with brother, Doug, to raise hogs and cattle, until the present time.

Jerry is survived by brothers, Pat and wife Susan of Houston, Doug of Robert Lee, and Tom and wife June of Robert Lee; sister-in-laws, Melba, Barbara and Debbie; numerous nephews, nieces and cousins; along with his favorite dog, Joe.

Jerry was preceded in death by his parents, C.T. and Ruth Wilkes; and brothers, Carroll Wilkes, Glen Wilkes, and Monte Wilkes.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to Robert Lee Methodist Church or the Robert Lee Volunteer Fire Department or a charity of choice.

There will be no viewing of the body. There will be a private burial at McKenzie Cemetery, Silver, Texas. A Celebration of life will be on September 30, 2023, at 1 pm at the First Methodist Family Life Center in Robert Lee, Texas.

Services are under the direction of Shaffer Funeral Home and online condolences may be made at shafferpioneer.com.

[10-1tc](#)

concerned, I retired from football, basketball, and track after junior high. Yet, I am forever grateful to coaches who did not treat me as nerdy unathletic kid who was the butt



### A Hike to Remember

By James M. Decker

My relationship with athletic activities is complicated. I do not dislike them. I like them, in principle. However, I excel naturally at a few things in life (talking too much, exasperating my wife, and so forth) and athletic activity is not one of them. I am also naturally flat-footed, which is unhelpful when hiking and running for any length of time. "Liking" and "enjoying" something can be very, very different.

My youth sports career was...unremarkable. In the Stamford Little League, I was limited to occasional stints in right field and drawing a few walks because I was lefthanded and the pitchers were afraid of beaming me. For the good of all

### Russell Davis

Agent

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