

County announces sale of detention center

By Hal Spain,
Coke County Judge

We are pleased to announce the sale of the Coke County Detention Center in Bronte. The new owners will take possession immediately and establish a computer data center at the facility. Coke County officials have worked diligently to get this property

back on the tax rolls and provide some much needed economic benefit to Bronte and Coke County. Special thanks goes to Mayor Paul (Buzz) Gohman and Water Superintendent Ricky Royall for their assistance in showing the property and discussing city services with the new owners.

things for each other, and that seems to me to be the way that a union is made...You're being made a partner by your partner's needs and the things that you're required to do to help...Love is not just a feeling; it's a practice, something you practice whether you feel like it or not."

Nowhere is the pressure of Christmas captured better than Merle Haggard's timeless classic "If We Make It Through December." I write about this every year for a reason. In the manner that made him one of the finest storytellers of 20th century America, Merle paints a stunningly accurate picture of a parent's deep dread for Christmas. The song's narrator has just been laid off. Prospects are grim. He has no real idea where his family is going to turn. That is bleak, no matter the season. But again, the societal pressures make it worse. In one of the most heartbreaking lyrics ever penned by a country music writer, Merle sings:

"I don't mean to hate December

It's meant to be the happy time of year

And my little girl don't understand

Why daddy can't afford no Christmas here."

It does not have to be that way. Merle's protagonist did not love his wife or daughter any less because he did not have the money for Christmas gifts. That father's love is shown by his undying hope - hope for a warmer season, hope for a fresh start in California, hope that if they could simply make it through December, they'd be fine.

As our calendar turns to December, I want to encourage each of you. If you are struggling this season - with grief, family difficulty, loneliness, financial pressure, or otherwise - please know that I see you. Please know that your ability to "perform" in the Christmas season does not define you, particularly regarding your love for others. Love is not defined by presents. It is defined as Wendell Berry describes, through practice. It is defined by the hopeful-despite-circumstance narrator of Merle Haggard's song.

This Christmas season, I encourage us to focus less on arbitrary standards of Christmas success and more on what really matters. Love one another. Lift up one another. Remain hopeful. And don't

just feel love or buy a present - practice love, whether you feel like it or not.

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 and subscribe to West of 98 wherever podcasts are found.

East Coke County Ambulance Service Donations and Memorials

Donations

Bill and Patsy Bratcher
Doyle Caulder
Barb Caulder
Coke County Kickapoo Water District

Marsha Vosburg
Lee and Janet Wommack
Cyndi Carlton
Douglas and Sherri Reagan
Jesse and Elaine Ensor
Thomas and Deborah Carter
William Braswell

Memorials

Dennie R. Braswell

Mary R. Lawhon
Bronte Class of '81

The Domino Effect

By Joe Nick Patoski

Back in 1972, Bob Phillips took on an extra assignment as a news reporter for KDFW-TV in Dallas. He became the host of a new program called 4 Country Reporter, going out into the Texas countryside to find interesting characters who told him their stories.

In 2002, Phillips even interviewed me and photographer Laurence Parent



Demolition! Things are in the works to make way for the new convenience store in Robert Lee. A street between Highways 158 and 208 has been closed and the old Friendship Cafe building has been demolished in preparation for the new store. There is also a construction fence up around the old motel in advance of its demolition.

for our book, Big Bend National Park. Naturally, he conducted the interview halfway up the park's Lost Mine Trail.

Nearly 50 years and more than 3 million miles after he first hit the road, Phillips is still traveling around the state as host of Texas Country Reporter, talking to folks and sharing their stories. He's a juggernaut now, with a production company and a show that airs on 23 affiliates across Texas as well as the nationwide RFD-TV cable channel; a YouTube channel; A Texas Tribute, a touring presentation backed by a live symphony; and the TCR Festival in Waxahachie every October. For the past seven years, partner Kelli Phillips has been riding shotgun. Yes, they are married.

I caught up with Bob and Kelli at their Dallas home during a break in the show's 50th season.

Joe Nick Patoski: Real important question: How old were you when you started to drive?

Bob Phillips: I spent a lot of weekends and a lot of summers up on my Aunt Lena's farm in Grayson County. There was an old pickup out there that I could drive on the farm probably starting when I was about 9 years old. I couldn't go out on

the road until I got my driver's license when I was 15.

JNP: What was the trigger to get into television?

BP: A guy named Eddie Barker who was both news director and the main anchor on the CBS affiliate in Dallas came to talk to my class - to my journalism class, when I was a first-semester freshman in college. This guy came and started telling stories. He was the first person to announce that John Kennedy had been killed in Dallas. He was five minutes ahead of Walter Cronkite. This was the guy that corralled Marina Oswald and did the first interview with her. He was a legend. I was mesmerized. As he was walking out of my class, I stopped him and asked him for his business card. He gave it to me and said, "What are you going to do with this?"

I said, "I'm going to ask you for a job." He gave me the greatest

encouragement because he said, "You do just that." I gave him 30 minutes to get back to the office, and then I called him. He had me come in for an interview the next morning, and he hired me.

JNP: When did you get into the idea of driving around looking for characters who tell good stories?

BP: I rode around with my dad a lot when I was a really little kid, and he always had a fishing pole and a set of dominoes. He said, "I never know when I'm going to see a place where I want to drop a line, and I never know when I'm going to meet three other guys who want to sit down and play some 42."

After I had started working, I'm watching the CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite, and there's a guy on there who's making a living doing what my dad did. It was Charles Kuralt, and I thought, "Oh, my gosh, my dad just did this for fun.

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I am announcing that I have filed for re-election as your **COKE COUNTY JUDGE.** With your continued guidance and support, I look forward to the opportunity of serving you in the new term.

Thank you,
Hal Spain

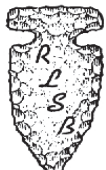
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