

**...West of 98**

*(Continued from previous page)  
If we make it through  
December, we'll be fine.*

To a man of Merle Haggard's generation and with his backstory, "California" represents a powerfultype of promise. Merle was born in 1936 in Oildale, California. Oildale is in Kern County, just outside of Bakersfield, where thousands of Oklahomans migrated in search of opportunity after being left destitute by drought and depression on the Great Plains. Merle's parents had done just that, leaving eastern Oklahoma in 1934. "California" was successful for some migrants and unsuccessful for others, but it represented a promise worth chasing for those who had no hope back home.

As Merle sang of warmth and California, he sang of promise, opportunity, and hope. Truth be told, the lyrics of the song provide no real guarantee that life will actually improve. He does not have a new job. He does not know where he is moving. He just knows that hope remains. As I have written in the past, hopelessness breeds many bad things in life, particularly in our rural communities. Substance abuse and criminal activity are often bred of hopelessness more than



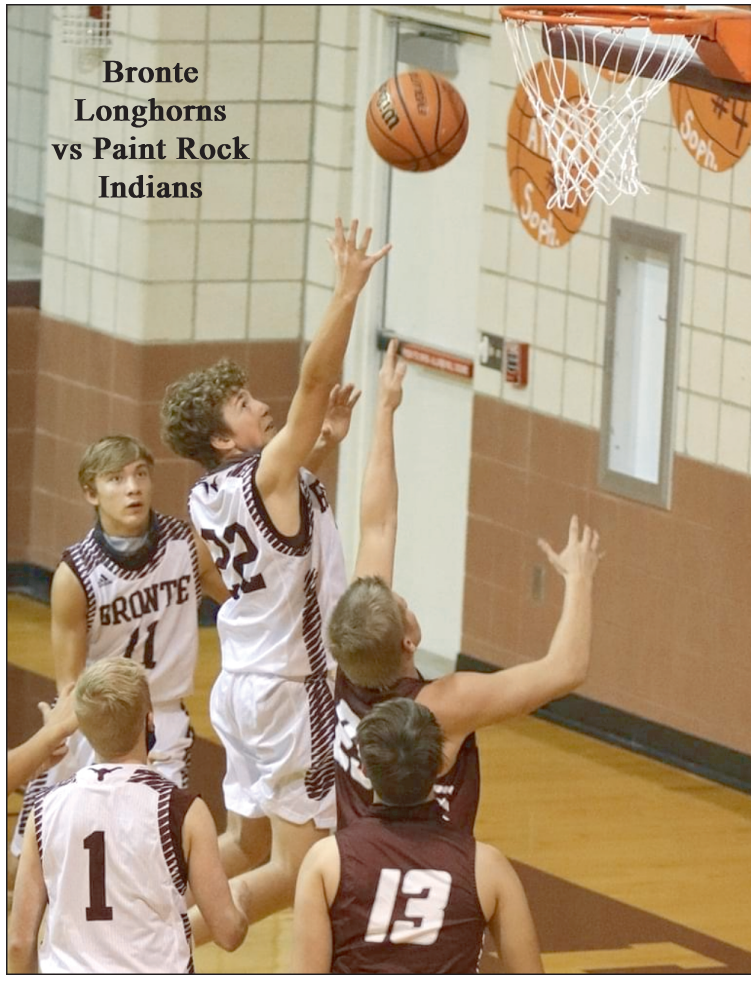
**Robert Lee  
Lady Dogies  
vs Cornerstone  
Christian  
School**

a desire for outlaw glory. Hope is one of our most powerful emotions. Without hope, a person can become despondent and make damaging decisions. But like Merle in the song, as long as we have hope, we still have a chance for success in life.

We all know that 2020 has been a trying year. I am not going to rehash any of that, because it has inundated us for months now. But Christmas is approaching and it brings its own set of annual challenges. You may be struggling

financially. You might be overwhelmed with life's obligations. You might be worried about whether you are doing "enough" for your family for Christmas. You might be facing your first Christmas without special loved ones.

We can't flip a magic switch and erase those struggles. But like Merle Haggard, no matter how bleak our circumstances, we can still have hope. Summer is coming and it will get warmer. Whether it is a new job, starting your own business, advancing



**Bronte  
Longhorns  
vs Paint Rock  
Indians**

your education, pursuing a passion in life, or something else, we can all have our own "California" of promise and opportunity awaiting. Hold on to that hope. Chase it. Bring it to reality. If we make it through

December, we'll be fine. *James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the "West of 98" website and forthcoming podcast. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com.*

**West Coke County  
EMS Memorials**

The following memorials have been made to West Coke County EMS.

**Jerry E. Quisenberry**

James Harmon  
**This Day in  
Texas History  
December 11**

On this day in 1737, Cabellos Colorados (Red Hair), a Lipan Apache chief, was captured by Spanish forces. When the Spanish founded San Antonio in 1718, the Apaches had discovered a convenient, accessible location at which to stage raids against their European enemies. Little is

known about Cabellos Colorados, but he appears in Spanish records on a number of occasions as he harassed the settlements. He figured prominently in a raid on San Antonio in 1731, and in 1734 his band seized two citizens in a raid. He stole horses from San Francisco de la Espada Mission and killed Indians from the missions of San Juan Capistrano and Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña. After numerous raids in 1736 and 1737, he was captured on December 11, 1737, and imprisoned at Bexar until October 1738, when he was sent as a prisoner to Mexico City.

**Safely make your holidays merry and bright  
at a Texas State park, THC Historic Site**

Although holiday celebrations look a little different this year, Texas State Parks and the Texas Historical Commission State Historic Sites are hosting more than 50 events across the state to help bring in some holiday cheer. Thirty-two Texas State Parks and six State Historic Sites are presenting Christmas themed scavenger hunts, self-guided walks and virtual events.

Anyone planning a trip to a Texas State Park should keep in mind that parks are operating at a limited capacity, reserving a day pass in advance is highly

recommended since some parks are expected to reach their capacity limit. Day passes can be reserved online though the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) website or over the phone by calling (512) 389-8900.

We encourage our visitors to follow posted rules including wearing a mask when inside buildings or when gathered with others at a Texas State Park. Local and statewide limitations and restrictions apply and can change rapidly, so we recommend checking social media or calling the park directly for updates before traveling. From 10 am - 4 pm, Saturday, December 19, visitors at Brazos Bend State Park can take part in a self-guided holiday hike. Visitors can pick up a guide at the Nature Center and start their walk at the Creekfield Lake trail to experience some holiday cheer and learn about the park. This easy hike is ADA accessible, kid friendly and can be done at your own pace. After completing the hike, parkgoers can return back to the Nature Center and share what they've learned to receive a prize.

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**Please Pray for our Communities,  
Our County, Our State and Our Country**



**And Don't Forget to Pray for Rain!**



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