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options that will be explored before the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am. The February meeting will be held on Monday, February 27.



The Essential Rural Places

By James M. Decker

Without any remaining wilderness we are committed wholly, without chance for even momentary reflection and rest, to a headlong drive into our technological termite-life, the Brave New World of a completely man-controlled environment. We need wilderness preserved—as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds—because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed.

--Wallace Stegner, "Wilderness Letter"

On December 3, 1960, acclaimed Western author Wallace Stegner wrote what became known as the "Wilderness Letter" (which is linked in this essay at westof98.substack.com). It was penned in response to a request for Stegner's input from the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC), which was established by Congress in 1958 to study recreation needs on public lands. Stegner's letter, which was subsequently published far and wide, would deeply influence the ORRRC's final report and the very course of wilderness preservation in America for

decades to come.

The ORRRC's work on the idea of "wilderness" initially focused on its quantitative values. A certain number of tourists could use a certain amount of land for fishing, hiking, photography, and more. The land could support a certain number of wild animals. It could support a certain amount of grazing for livestock. It could produce a certain amount of timber and minerals. Stegner looked past these metrics and focused on wilderness as something with extraordinary intangible value. Stegner wrote that wilderness had helped form the very character and history of the American people. Exchanging wilderness for technology had certain quantifiable losses, but the true loss was that which would diminish the very essence of our character and spirit.

As I embark on 2023's essays on the concept of community-building, I have mullied on Stegner's famous letter. I am struck by the similarities between Stegner's view of the idea of "wilderness" and the idea of "community" as it helps compose our rural America. In fact, I would argue that the two are inextricably intertwined. The march of "progress" in Stegner's era sought to pave, clear-cut, and extract all value from wilderness and it was the very same march that pushed

rural America's economy into decline and its communities into tattered remnants. Dating to the era of Theodore Roosevelt, Western demagogues had long pushed naked progress in the name of "helping" rural Westerners, but the "help" usually went to their own pockets or to their cronies. On the other extreme, the irascible preservationists often failed to consider the context in which humans COULD live on the land.

Wise men like Stegner and Wisconsin ecologist/farmer Aldo Leopold saw the healthy possibilities between naked progress and extreme preservation. Their successor Wendell Berry (a student of Stegner at Stanford University who views Leopold as the most important conservationist in American history) has brought this view to a modern audience and inspired countless others, by showing how humans can live on the land and with the land, amidst all its contours and constraints, and in a manner that builds up life—all of it—for all of God's creatures that inhabit each such place.

Stegner described his Wilderness Letter as the mere "labor of an afternoon," because the brilliant author needed only that period of time to write such a powerful work. I am no Wallace Stegner, but perhaps rural America needs its own

Death Notice

Fly

Joy Ladean Fly moved into her heavenly home on the morning of January 24, 2023 at the well-lived age of 92.

Joy is survived by her eldest son, Lyn (Alice) of Plano, Texas; daughter, Dianna Fly of San Angelo; daughter-in-law, Jody Fly; grandson, Brad Fly (Mercyla); and great-

grandchildren, Abbie Shelburne McIntire (Weston) of Boynton Beach, Florida, Amory and Kemper.

A graveside service was held to honor Joy's life under the direction of George Cooper at Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens at 3 pm on Saturday, January 28, 2023.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to First Baptist Church of Bronte, Texas (424 S. Washington Street / Bronte, TX 76933).

Friends of the RLCC meeting held

The January meeting of the Friends of the Robert Lee Care Center was held on Monday, January 23, at 10 am with 8 members present.

Old business items discussed were the Christmas Decoration project and the Gazebo dedication sign. A thank you card from the residents for the new Christmas yard decorations was shared with those present.

Members present got to see the Christmas gift boxes for outdoor use that were made by Brantly and Sharee Robertson. These were displayed in the backyard near the kitchen. Additional items will be added next year to make this a larger display.

Harriett Ann Demere presented new information on getting a dedication sign for the gazebo. After discussion, this item was tabled until the next meeting. As a continuation of the project to help with seasonal and occasion decorations, a motion was made to allot \$200 for the RLCC Activity Director Mary Rodriguez to shop for St. Patrick's Day decorations for the seasonal tree is she is using in the main lobby.

Discussion was held and decisions were made on what to serve for refreshments for the March birthday party.

The Mother's Day tea was discussed with Mary Rodriguez and the auxiliary will furnish tea cookies and carnations again this year.

Discussion was held on a new on going project to provide a blanket throw and socks from

the FRLCC to the welcome packet given to new residents at the time of admission. A motion was made and passed to support this project. At this point there were enough of these items left over from the resident Christmas gifts to last a couple of months.

Mary Rodriguez shared with the auxiliary that she could use help in finding a way to have hummingbird feeders outside resident rooms in some areas where there is no longer soil available to put a pole in the ground. Ideas were discussed on



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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

First United Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes
 Bronte • (325) 650-4836
 Sun. 11:00 am Worship

St. James Catholic Church

215 N. Washington, Bronte
 (325) 365-2687

Rev. Timothy Hayter, Pastor

Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am

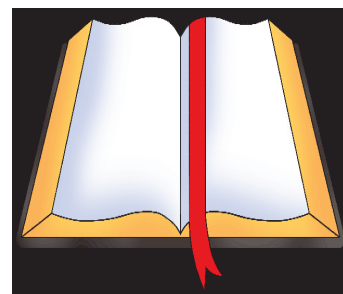
4C Cowboy Church

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 United Methodist Church

PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne
 Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417
 Cyndi Weidner, Pastor

Sun. 10 am Sunday School
 11 am Worship,
 5 pm Choir Practice

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

Recardo Reyes, Preacher

Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
 11 am & 6 pm, 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 & 7 pm, Worship

Wed. 7 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