

THE OBSERVER/ENTERPRISE

Published Weekly

The Observer/Enterprise, LLC
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 www.ObserverEnterprise.com

Periodical Rate Postage paid at Robert Lee, Texas

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to
 Observer/Enterprise
 PO Box 1329, Robert Lee, Texas 76945

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Per Year in Coke County ... \$35.00
 Per Year Elsewhere in Texas ... \$40.00
 Per Year Outside of Texas ... \$45.00

Death Notices

Myers

Fred Myers, 82, passed this earthly life on Tuesday, January 25, 2022.

Visitation was from 6 pm to 7 pm, Friday, January 28, 2022, at Englund's. Graveside services were at 11 am Saturday, January 29, 2022, at Resthaven Cemetery in Southland. Arrangements were by Englund's Funeral

Service of Slaton.

Fred is survived by his son, Stephen and his wife, Sterling of Robert Lee; his sister-in-law, Peggy Myers; his nephews, John Beatty and his wife, Penny and David Beatty and his wife, Tara; his nieces, Debbie Thurman and Nedra Sheeley; several great-nephews and nieces; and many, many friends.

Stovall-Duncan

Oneita (Nita) Maxine Stovall-Duncan passed into the loving arms of Jesus on January 24, 2022, in San Angelo.

Left behind to cherish her memory are her husband, Bob

Duncan of Robert Lee; sister-in-law, Stella Duncan of Robert Lee; daughter, Nancy Halfmann and husband Billy; son, Phill Stovall and wife Star; brother, Jimmy Newsom and wife Frankie and family; sister-in-law, Janet Wright; grandchildren, Jill Halfmann, Shane Halfmann and wife Britnie, Stacy Halfmann and Leslye Molamphy; and great-grandchildren, Kinsley, Brody, Preslee, and Abigail. Her Duncan children include Phyllis Calder, Bobby and wife Joyce Duncan, Buck and wife Kellye Duncan; Duncan grandchildren, Jarren Calder and wife Rachel, Jaree Beets and husband Dusty, Derek Duncan and wife Ashley, Brenton Duncan, Kelsy Millican and husband Lance, and Kaden Duncan; Duncan great-grandchildren include Elise, Colt, Kyler, Karlee, Riley, Reed, River, Cooper, Kelsey, Charlotte, Caroline and Coy.

Viewing was held on Friday, January 28, from 8 am to 8 pm at Johnson's Funeral Home. Graveside service was at 11 am Saturday, January 29 in Johnson's Lawnhaven Memorial Gardens.

Last week, I wrote that television and the internet have rapidly homogenized and nationalized our culture, untethering culture from local place. In the early 1990s, Wendell Berry wrote that *"more and more country people, like city people, allow their economic and social standards to be set by television and salesmen and outside experts"* and that *"the message of both the TV programs and the sales talks is that the watchers should spend whatever is necessary to be like everybody else."* Berry wrote that television encourages us to imagine that we have advanced *"beyond sitting till bedtime with the neighbors on a Kentucky ridgetop...the stories that now entertain us are made up for us in New York or Los Angeles or other centers of such commerce."*

I am hardly a promoter of a Pollyannaish vision of rural America that probably never existed in real life. But James McMurtry paints a vision of what DID happen in real life. Rural America is a hard place to make a living. In fact, that is often what drew people to the

frontier - opportunity to build something for your family if you were able to overcome the obstacles. Rural sunsets are often magnificent. It fills a person with wonder to see a truly dark night sky, full of stars and free of light pollution. But once Mama's life centered around the satellite dish, when she was told to spend whatever necessary to be like everyone else, why did any of that matter? Once your culture revolves around the same things that are available everywhere, why not just pack up and live somewhere easier, with better weather, fewer obstacles, and fewer dust storms?

Local culture matters. It provides value. It builds relationships and community. In the absence of local culture, well, the people will simply dream of flying as far as they can get from places like Levelland.

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.

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
 Pastor George Cooper
 Sunday 9:45 am Sunday School,
 10:55 am Worship, 6 pm Bible
 Study & Worship
 Wednesday 6 pm RA's & GA's,
 6:30 pm Youth & Adults

First United Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes
 Bronte
 (325) 473-3281

Rev. Stacy Sprinkle, Pastor
 Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School
 11:00 am Worship

St. James Catholic Church

215 N. Washington, Bronte
 (325) 365-2687
 Rev. Yesu Mulakaleti, Jr., 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

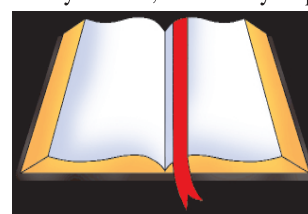
Robert Lee

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

Robert Lee Cowboy Church

James Brunson, Pastor
 (469) 834-3932
 10:30 am Sunday • Robert Lee Rec Hall

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. Yesu Mulakaleti, Pastor
 Saturday Vigil Mass 5 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

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



Levelland

By James M. Decker

*"Flatter than a tabletop
 Makes you wonder why they
 stopped here*

*Wagon must have lost a wheel
 or they lacked ambition one."*

Thus opens "Levelland," written and recorded by songwriting great James McMurtry and later recorded by fellow Texas luminary Robert Earl Keen. It is a brilliant song, both in substance and form. There's no chorus, just four verses. It is filled with the sardonic wit that James McMurtry shares with his late father Larry. However, it's hardly the stuff of Chamber of Commerce boosterism dreams. The descriptions of Levelland? They go downhill from that stark opening lyric.

The narrator is a young native who questions much of his town's existence and his family's experiences there. Granddad grew the dryland wheat, we're told. He admirably "stood on his own two feet" until overcome by some form of dementia. Daddy farms irrigated cotton, relying on an Ogallala Aquifer that is withering away. The narrator dreams of leaving on a jet

plane. Then, the fourth verse takes an even more sobering turn from the already-sobering decline of the West Texas farm economy. We meet the narrator's mother:

*"Mama used to roll her hair
 Back before the central air
 We'd sit outside and watch the
 stars at night
 She'd tell me to make a wish
 I'd wish we both could fly
 Don't think she's seen the sky
 Since we got the satellite
 dish."*

My friend Keith Irwin told me

on Twitter that this line rips his heart out every time he hears it. Mine too. I've listened to "Levelland" thousands of times at this point in my life. If there's ever a song that speaks to my entire *raison d'être*, it's this one: a young person longing to escape a declining small town in West Texas and how to reverse that. Levelland is the poetic location, but it represents communities across rural America. And it is this fourth verse on which I place much importance.

Edward Jones

Cold shoulder from your broker? Let's talk.



Larry M Gilbert, CFP®, AAMS®
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