

Texas Institute of Letters

February 2016

Newsletter

Howdy Fellow TIL Members!

Thank you all *so much* for the lovely notes!

I am SO very honoured to serve TIL in this way!

And, thank you in advance for your patience in my newsletter-learning-curve, I know I have big shoes to fill -- thank you Darwin for all your hard work on this for so many years!

So let's get started with the news!

TIL Dues

Something new this is year is the option of paying a one time, lifetime membership fee of \$1,000.00. (It might be nice to not worry about that year to year dues payment!).

Please send in your \$50 TIL Banquet Fee now with the Attached **2016 TIL DUES FORM**.

Please send in the form at the end of the Newsletter. We need the funds as soon as possible to contract for our 2016 Awards Reception and Banquet.

And, it is good to remember just how your dues impact the literary world:

TIL's literary contests award more money in prizes than any other state-oriented literary contests in the U.S. We also fund the Jones Fellowship at the Dobie Paisano Ranch each year. We are fortunate to have investment accounts that provide us with much of the funding for these activities. *However, each year, TIL's investments dedicated to these prizes and the fellowship come up short.* So TIL has to depend on annual donations and to dipping into other TIL money to ensure they are awarded. Your annual dues help TIL cover its expenses and keep us in a position to recognize literary achievements by Texans or about Texas. TIL is a 100 percent volunteer organization; none of your dues money or other donations go to pay salaries or to rent offices. It is also recognized by the IRS as a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization, so **donations are tax deductible.** **Giving to TIL is one of the few times we get to see *direct* results of our financial gifting!**

Along with your dues this year, please consider a \$100 donation!

Annual Banquet and Reception Update

Mark your calendars!

The TIL Banquet will be **April 15-16, 2016** and this year, it will be held at the AT&T Center on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin.

Friday, April 15th at 6:30 p.m., our president, Andrés Tijerina and Kurt Heinzelman have put together a spectacular poetry reception, readings, and the TIL Poetry Awards presentation. The TIL Poetry Reception and Awards is fast becoming a premier poetry event in Texas.

The Saturday night banquet on April 16th will honor Sarah Bird, winner of the 2016 Lon Tinkle Award, which is presented annually to a distinguished writer with a career in letters associated with Texas. Certainly Sarah's literary career is distinguished, and she's also been very active in TIL for more than twenty years. She's been a member of the Council and frequently serves as a judge or committee chair for TIL's literary contests. And she's been a Dobie Paisano Fellow. Sarah has a well deserved reputation for being one of the best public speakers in Austin, and it will be a treat to hear her comments at the banquet.

2016 TIL AWARDS RECEPTION AND BANQUET

The 2016 TIL Reception, Poetry Readings, and TIL Poetry Awards Ceremony will be held in Austin Friday, **April 15** at the AT&T Executive Conference Center on the University of Texas campus and the TIL Awards Reception and Banquet will be held Saturday, **April 16** in the Bob Bullock Texas History Center.

The Friday evening **TIL Poetry Awards Ceremony** is fast becoming the premier poetry event with readings by our finest poets. Book awards and book signings will follow the reception held in the open-air courtyard of the spectacular *AT&T Executive Center* on the U.T. campus.

The Saturday night **TIL Awards Banquet** will feature the finest writers in the great ballroom of the *Bullock Texas History Museum*. Book signings will be available at both receptions.

HOTEL RESERVATION

Register now for the special TIL rates at the AT&T Executive Center:

Guest room cut-off date: Friday, **Mar 25, 2016**

HOTEL RESERVATIONS WEBSITE:

<https://resweb.passkey.com/go/TILAWB0416>

Don't forget to plan a visit the [Harry Ransom Center](#) and the [Blanton Museum of Art](#) across the street from the AT&T Center on the U.T. campus.

The 2016 Texas Institute of Letters Awards Program
AT&T Executive Conference Center, University of Texas
April 15 & 16, 2016

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

Friday, April 15

6:30 – 9 PM **Reception** **Courtyard, AT&T Center** **MC:** Kurt Heinzelman

Cash Bar & Light Hors d’oeuvres **Music:** String Ensemble

Poetry Readings – 2016 TIL Poetry Contest Finalists

Presentation of 2016 TIL Poetry Awards

Book Signings Award Winners and finalists

Saturday, April 16

11 AM – 1 PM	TIL Council Meeting	Private Dining Room, AT&T Center
2 – 3 PM	New Members Readings Presentation of New Member Certificates	AT&T Auditorium Emcee: Steve Davis
3 – 4 PM	Presentation of TIL Awards:	Children, Young Adult, etc.
4 – 5 PM	Book Signing:	New Member and Award Winners' books

Saturday, April 16

6 – 7 PM	Reception Cash Bar	Bullock Texas History Museum (2 nd Floor Lobby) Book Signings
7 – 8 PM	Dinner	2nd Floor Ballroom
8 PM	Awards Program Opens Lon Tinkle Award	
9:50 PM	CLOSING by TIL President Andrés Tijerina Book Signings	

You can still pay your 2016-2017 dues and make reservations for the banquet, but please do this asap! Please use the form at the end of this newsletter to make a payment.

President's Message

Dear TIL members,

As this TIL Newsletter goes out, I'd like to review the important events that the TIL plays in our community of writers. Right now, we are coordinating 9 panels of judges reviewing about 100 literary works and 13 literary awards to select the best writers of Texas in 2016. The panel chairs are juggling the many entries and negotiating with their respective judges to select the finalists. Then they will name the prize winner who will be publicly honored with a cash prize at our 2016 TIL Awards Banquet at the Bullock Texas History Museum in Austin. The members of the Texas Institute of Letters are the conservators of fine literature in Texas. That is our solemn mission.

The judging panel members are all volunteers. The TIL relies on our own credibility with the public—the press, universities, and major donors—to privately raise the funds and award the finest cash prizes to the contest winners. The beauty of all this is that it works. We have the funds, we operate the programs, and we organize the receptions and banquets to award the prizes. Major funds. Major prizes. And the public recognition that can make the career of a young writer.

We will have fun. We'll be headquartered at the fine AT&T Executive Conference Center on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. Our members will stroll the campus to visit once again the old library in the Main Tower Building, to see the names and inscriptions on the hardwood beams in the ceiling. We're going to have a memorable Friday night reception in the open-air courtyard of the AT&T Center for the 2016 TIL Poetry Awards. We will tour the literary holdings of the Harry Ransom Center—the Gutenberg Bible, the papers of America's finest novelists. And we will have our own private tours of the collections in the Blanton Art Museum. Then we will publicly present the winners of the book prizes at the Ballroom of the Bullock History Museum on Saturday night, April 16, 2016.

But let's remember the solemn charge of the TIL, given us by the founders, to identify, support, and give due recognition to the finest works that Texans give to literature. That's what we're all about. Let's sign up for the banquet, pay our dues, donate, drive to Austin, and bestow the mantle of the literary prize to our 2016 award winners. See you in Austin.

Andrés Tijerina, President

Texas Institute of Letters

Member News

And now your member news!

These are listed in order of their arrival.

Larry D. Thomas was the featured poet in the Spring 2016 special issue of the *San Pedro River Review*, "The American Southwest." In April 2016 he will be a featured poet at the Scissortail Creative Writing Festival, East Central University, Ada, OK. Thomas has two poetry chapbooks in press, *Jake & Violet at Right Hand Pointing* and *The Circus* at Blue Horse Press (publisher of the *San Pedro River Review*).

Carolyn Banks wants to report that the premiere issue of Bastrop Home & Hearth is out. She is editor and publisher, and is attaching link to the online version, but says the physical magazine is gorgeous!

http://issuu.com/digitalpublish/docs/bastrop_home_hearth_mag/1

Ann McCutchan's fifth book, *Where's the Moon? a memoir of the Space Coast and the Florida Dream*, is forthcoming in September from TAMU Press. Her current project, *The Life She Wished to Live: a Biography of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings*, is under contract with W.W. Norton. Ann recently resigned from the University of North Texas to write full-time.

Fran Vick says The Texas Folklore Society Publication she edited, *Tales of Texas Cooking: Stories and Recipes from the Trans-Pecos to the Piney Woods and High Plains to the Gulf Prairies*, came out mid-December and was out-of-print by the first part of January, and they are already into second printing. She says this is a first for her and assumes that publicity on Facebook is responsible for the quick sell-out!

Naomi Shihab Nye's novel for children, *THE TURTLE OF OMAN*, won the Arab American Book Award for Children and has been nominated for the Sakura Medal in Japan.

Joe Lansdale's new novel *Hap and Leonard* novel, *Honky Tonk Samurai* is out now, soon to be followed by *Hap and Leonard* TV show on Sundance TV March 2nd. In March, a *Hap and Leonard* collection, titled *Honky Tonk Samurai*, comes out, and a Paperback version of his historical *Paradise Sky* is due shortly. <https://www.yahoo.com/tv/hap-and-leonard-a-behind-the-scenes-preview-of-152547816.html>

Norma Cantu says in addition to essays and articles on Latina/o poetry and on foodways, she has published several books, the fruit of many years of work. In 2015, her edited book, *Ofrenda: Liliana Wilson's Art of Dissidence and Dreams* (Texas A&M University Press) saw the light. The book includes over 60 images, an autobiographical essay by Wilson and 8 essays by various scholars including Kay Turner, Patricia Ruiz Healy and Marjorie Agosin. She also edited *Transcendental Train Yards*, a collaborative suite of prints by Marta Sanchez with her poetry (Wings Press) (http://www.wingspress.com/book.cfm?book_ID=203) that includes essays by Peter Haney, Constance Cortez and Tomas Ybarra Frausto reflecting on the suite of lithographs printed at Coronado Studio in Austin over a period of over seven years. Another long-term project, the anthology *Entre Guadalupe y Malinche: Tejanas in Literature and Art* that she co-edited with Inés Hernández-Ávila (University of Texas Press) gathers the work of over 50 Tejana authors and artists. (<http://utpress.utexas.edu/index.php/books/hernandez-avila-cantu-%20entre-guadalupe-malinche>). Mexican and Mexican American women have written about Texas and their lives in the state since colonial times. It is the first time, a representative body of work about the lives and experiences of women who identify as Tejanas in both the literary and visual arts is published. The book manifests the nuanced complexity of what it means to be Tejana and how this identity offers alternative perspectives to contemporary notions of Chicana identity, community, and culture. Considering Texas-Mexican women and their identity formations, subjectivities, and location on the longest border between Mexico and any of the southwestern states acknowledges the profound influence that land and history have on a people and a community, and how Tejana creative traditions have been shaped by historical, geographical, cultural, linguistic, social, and political forces. This representation of Tejana arts and letters brings together the work of rising stars along with well-known figures such as writers Gloria Anzaldúa, Emma Pérez, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Carmen Tafolla, and Pat Mora, and artists such as Carmen Lomas Garza, Kathy Vargas, Santa Barraza, and more. The collection attests to the rooted presence of the original indigenous peoples of the land now known as *Tejas*, as well as a strong Chicana/Mexicana feminism that has its precursors in Tejana history itself. Finally, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera* University of New Mexico Press published an expanded edition with added images and pieces.

Jesse Sublett III says his last true crime book, *1960s Austin Gangsters: Organized Crime That Rocked the Capital*, was published in the spring of 2015 but has long Cadillac legs, because he's still getting requests for interviews and appearances, which adds to his busy schedule playing gigs to support his music EP, "Eldorado," released in December 2015. At the same time he's writing a book on Esther's Follies, the long-running political - cultural satire vaudeville show that has rocked Austin's East Sixth Street neighborhood since 1977. Although the troupe began as an anarchic bunch of theater fanatics and agitators, they have become one of the most culturally respected institutions in Austin and not only help keep the "Weird" coming but have helped promote development and promotion of the historical heritage of downtown Austin. As a writer, he's found interviewing theater people to be just as fun, crazy and stimulating as outlaws, musicians, and other people who'll do anything to avoid having a 9 to 5 job.

Leon Hale is hoping to see the sun rise on his 95th birthday in May.

From the front porch of an old farm house in Winedale, Texas, he has become a bird watcher. On his best day so far, he has watched one green-tailed towhee, a loggerhead shrike, 4 godwits, 3 yellow-bellied sapsuckers, a pair of ladderback woodpeckers, 14 crows and 32 buzzards.

Jerry Craven has a new novel out from Angelina River Press: *The Jungle's Edge*, something he wrote while teaching in a Malaysian university. This is his 6th novel. The university press for which Craven serves as director has changed its name to Lamar University Literary Press, and it has a new URL: lamar.edu/literarypress. The new name better reflects the press's niche, which is new works of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. In 2015 the press published 20 books; among them are works by 5 members of TIL: Terry Dalrymple, W.K. Stratton, Jim Sanderson, Paul Christensen, and Chip Dameron. In February, 2016, LULP will publish *The Great American Wise Ass Poetry Anthology*, edited by TIL member Jerry Bradley (with Ulf Kirchdorfer). www.jerrycraven.com.

Betty Adcock has completed her seventh full length collection of poems, to be titled *Reach*. Her Chapbook, "Widow Poems," which appeared last year, is from Jacar Press in North Carolina.

Stephanie Elizondo Griest has placed her next book with UNC Press. Tentatively titled, "All the Agents & Saints: Dispatches from the U.S. Borderlands," it examines the social, cultural, and existential impact of having an ancestral land sliced in two by an international borderline, as experienced by Tejanos and Mohawk Indians. It will be published in Spring 2017. Griest is currently in her third year as Assistant Professor of Creative Nonfiction Writing at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Chip Dameron's latest book, *Drinking from the River: New and Selected Poems, 1975-2015*, was published by Wings Press in September 2015. Individual poems have recently appeared in *Langdon Review*, *Texas Poetry Calendar*, and *Right Hand Pointing*.

Laura Wilson's newest book, *That Day: Pictures in the American West*, was published this fall by Yale University Press in conjunction with SMU's Clements Center for Southwest Studies. She also has an exhibition of her photographs by the same name on view at the Amon Carter Museum through February 2016.

Roberto Bonazzi says a new collection of fictions, *AWAKENED BY SURPRISE*, will be published by Lamar University Literary Press, spring 2016. It includes works that previously appeared in *Transatlantic Review* (London), *TriQuarterly*, *Granite*, *The Village Voice*, *New Letters*, *Minnesota Review*, and seven others, as well as in the anthologies *Plaza of Encounters* and *Tales of Austin*. The longest piece, "The Musical Erotic" was published in *Excelsior* (Mexico City). These works were published from 1975 to 2015. Bonazzi's most recent book is *OUTSIDE THE MARGINS*, Literary Commentaries, Wings Press, 2015.

Robert Flynn says Marines who served in the Combined Unit Pacification Program of the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments in Vietnam honored me at a reunion in Houston. They presented me with a plaque including me as one of them and gave me the sculpture of a bald eagle for telling their story in "A Personal War in Vietnam." I was a Marine in the Korean war and an embed with Golf Company (CUPP), Second Battalion, Fifth Marines in Vietnam. Thank you for your service Bob!

Sarah Cortez' book of poetry, *Cold Blue Steel*, (Texas Review Press) was short-listed for the PEN Southwest Literary Prize in Poetry. Cortez finished 2015 with a prose poem in *Texas Monthly* and opened 2016 as a featured author interviewed in *Lone Star Literary Life*. Her poetry was published or is forthcoming in *Southern Poetry Anthology VIII*, *Untameable City: Poems on the Nature of Houston*, *The Great Wise-Ass Anthology*, *Post Road*, *LABOR*, *Texas Review*, and *Cenizo Journal*. *Texas Books in Review* will publish her book review of two Texas poets. Cortez recently finished another round of television tap ins as a guest expert for the American Trigger Sports Network for the show "Stop the Threat." One of her short stories and an essay on infamous Houston serial killers Dean Coryll and Elmer Wayne Henley will appear in *Aradia* and be featured in a reading at the Center for Study of the Southwest at Texas State University along with other contributors. In June, Cortez will teach writing in (poetic) forms at the 21st West Chester University Poetry Conference, the nation's largest annual poetry conference, billed as "The nation's most intellectually rigorous conference for poets." (Philadelphia Inquirer).

Skip Hollandsworth, Texas Monthly Executive Editor says his true-crime history, *The Midnight Assassin: Panic, Scandal, and the Hunt for America's First Serial Killer*, about a mysterious series of murders that took place in Austin Texas between December 1884 and December 1885, will be released in April by Holt and Co.

Gerald Duff says his novel *THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MAMA: The Unauthorized Life of Elvis's Twin*, which came from Baskerville Books in 1995, will be published in a new edition by Devault-Graves this spring.

Deborah Paredez began teaching in the Creative Writing Program in Fall, 2016 at Columbia University and her poem, "Lightening," (published in RHINO Magazine), was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Reginald Gibbons says his new book, *How Poems Think* (criticism), University of Chicago Press, was published Sept. 2015. His forthcoming book: *Last Lake* (poems), University of Chicago Press, is due fall 2016. He says he been working for several years on the creation of a national museum of American literature, The American Writers Museum. It will open in Chicago in early 2017. Please see: Americanwritersmuseum.org

Bryce Milligan's Wings Press continues to celebrate its 40th year with an exhibit devoted to Wings Press book designs and the history of the press, April 9 - May 21 at Bihl Haus Arts in San Antonio. The exhibit will be curated by UTSA rare books & special collections librarian Agnes Czeblakow. A book design and publishing panel discussion will be held April 23 at 2 p.m., featuring regional independent publishers, editors, book critics, illustrators, librarians. . . . A reading by Wings Press poets and writers will be held on April 30 at 2 p.m. Wings Press will debut a new anthology -- *Far Out: Poems of the '60s*, edited by TIL members Wendy Barker and Dave Parsons -- at this year's AWP conference in Los Angeles. Closer to home, the University of St. Thomas in Houston will host a reading from *Far Out* at 7 p.m. on May 4. On May 5 at 5:30, Lone Star College-Montgomery will host a reading/dinner to be held in conjunction with the annual Walt Whitman Birthday month celebration. The theme this year will be "Was Walt the First Hippie?" Appropriate attire is not *de rigueur*, but the publisher intends to show up in flowers and love beads.

Wings is also looking forward to the publication in April of *The Magic of Mariachi / La Magia del Mariachi*, a bilingual book of poems and paintings celebrating the musicians, culture and history of this increasingly international art form, which will debut at this year's Festiba at the University of Texas/Rio Grande Valley. This is the second collaboration by poet Steven Schneider and artist Reefka Schneider, whose *Borderlines: Drawing Border Lives* is one of Wings' best-selling titles. Bryce Milligan is looking forward to the publication of a new book of poems in September: *Take to the Highway: Arabesques for Travelers* (Albuquerque: West End Press). Jane Hirshfield says this is a book "of distinction and evocative power." David Lee calls it "Milligan's periplum voyage of discovery. The prose poems in the central section are perhaps as fine a unified collection as Follain's *A World Rich in Anniversaries*."

William Jack Sibley has recently signed a WGA option on his screenplay *Amorcito*. Busy hunting down a director, he's a co-producer on this one with L.A. producer Ron Senkowski. Onward into the fog!

Chitra Divakaruni's new novel, *Before We Visit the Goddess*, will be out in April 2016.

It's a novel-in-stories about three generations of mothers and daughters who must each answer for herself what it means to be a successful woman . It begins in India, but several parts are set in Houston and Austin. Divakaruni was listed in 2015 by the Economic Times as one of the world's 20 most influential Indian American women. The opera *River of Light*, for which she wrote the libretto, premiered in Houston (Houston Grand Opera) and was then picked up by a Californian opera company and performed in the San Francisco area. Her latest novel, *Oleander Girl*, an international bestseller, won the Premio Scanno Award, also known as the Italian Nobel. The ceremony was held in the 15th-century town square of Scanno.

Karla K. Morton's eleventh book should arrive this Summer, 2016. It is a best-so-far collection titled *Accidental Origami: New and Selected Works by karla k. morton*.

(Texas Review Press). Morton has also been honoured as Creative Consultant for the new Texas Poets Podcast created by Terry Jude Miller and produced by Anne McCrady, with interviews led by Dr. Stephen Souris. The Texas Poets Podcast is a monthly podcast that features Texas poets discussing the poetry of other Texas poets. Please visit www.TexasPoetsPodcast.com and have a listen! Also, as a reminder, the Book Drive for West, Texas is still on. Their new school's opening was delayed until this coming Fall, 2016, so there is *still* time to send in your own, signed books. They will be showcasing Texas writers in their new building, and everyone is encouraged to send your own books in (and don't forget your autograph!) Please note the **new address** to send your books is: West Book Drive c/o karla k. morton, 112 Alread Court, Fort Worth, Texas 76102.

Ann Weisgarber's novel, *The Promise*, was the selection for the 2016 Gulf Coast Reads, a one-community, one-read program. The "one" community, as it turned out, covered seven counties in the Houston area. Libraries, museums, and academic institutions hosted 120 programs that revolved around the novel. Ann traveled 2,000 miles during October to meet readers in cities as big as Houston and as small as Hitchcock. Although she was crawling by the end of the month, she reports that people still read and in Texas, the printed book is alive and well.

Alan Birkelbach's ninth book of poetry, *Meridienne Verte*, came out in September of 2015 from Purple Flag Press and now his tenth book, *Waking the Bones: New and Selected Works*, arrived in January of 2016 from Texas Review Press. In addition, he has been invited by Bison Books--a University of Nebraska Press imprint--to write the Introduction to a new edition of John G. Neihardt's *A Cycle of the West*. The press is updating their backlist of classic publications and that book is one of several selected. (As a point of reference: *A Cycle of the West* contains the section *A Song of Hugh Glass*, the story on which the movie *The Revenant* is based.)

Andrés Tijerina is scheduled to introduce his new eBook *The Handbook of Tejano History* at the annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association in Irving, Texas on March 3, 2016. Andres is a Fellow of the TSHA, and edited the *Tejano Handbook* with his co-editor and a fellow TIL member Emilio Zamora, Professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin. Their *Tejano Handbook* will be fully integrated into the online *Handbook of Texas*, and is under contract to be published in hard copy in 2017. The TSHA plans to hold an inaugural press

conference and reception for the 2017 publication of the hard copy *Handbook of Tejano History*.

The TSHA event on March 3, 2016 is scheduled to be held at 3:30 PM in the The Mandalay Ballroom at Irving's Omni Hotel in Las Colinas in, and entitled "Open Reception for the Handbook of Tejano History" hosted by CEO Brian Bolinger of the TSHA.

Carolyn Osborne says she will have an essay titled "Mingling With the Scots" published in the July/August issue of the *Southwest Review*.

Kathi Appelt's newest novel, cowritten with Alison McGhee, will be released on March 8th. The title is *Maybe a Fox* (Atheneum). So far, it's received three starred reviews from *Booklist*, *Publisher's Weekly*, and *School Library Journal*. Kathi and Alison will be on tour in March and April and will be featured presenters at the Los Angeles Times Book Festival. Kathi also received the good news that her picture book, *When Otis Courted Mama* (Harcourt Houghton Mifflin) was named one of five honor books for the Charlotte Zolotow Award for excellence in picture book text. The Award is given by the Cooperative Children's Book Center in memory of renowned children's writer and publisher Charlotte Zolotow.

TIL OFFICERS

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Sergio Troncoso, El Paso/New York City, second term ends April 2017

Ann Weisgarber, Sugar Land, first term ends April 2017

<http://www.texasinstituteofletters.org/>

You may send items to admin at [texasinstituteofletters.org](mailto:admin@texasinstituteofletters.org). Substitute the symbol @ for the word “at”.

2015-16 Dues Form, Banquet Reservation Form

Please print this form and send it with a check for your 2015-16 dues to the address below.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-Mail _____

TIL dues for fiscal year 2015-16 _____
\$50.00

Paisano Fund _____

Fred Whitehead Memorial Endowment Fund _____

Ramirez Scholarly Book Award Endowment Fund _____

First Book of Poetry Award _____

TIL Weekend/Banquet Tickets, \$50 per person

(The banquet will be held April 16, 2016, in Austin)

Yes, I would like to add my \$100 donation! _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED

*Make check payable to **Texas Institute of Letters** and send with this form to:*

Texas Institute of Letters, P.O. Box 609, Round Rock TX 78680

Please have your payments mailed by March 28!