



# Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

March 2016



Greetings!

Welcome to Spring, but don't pack that winter coat away just yet. This is Texas and we all know Mother Nature likes to wait until the trees start to bud before we get that last frost.

The Lee brothers did it again. I didn't think they could possibly top last

year's performance, but they did and made it look easy. What a show! Lots of great talent, wonderful demos, good food, very tasty home brew, and the nicest bunch of folks you would ever want to run into. The "Vessel" competition had to be seen to be believed. Very nice work! It just don't get much better than that. I can't wait until next year. Great job guys!

Get ready! The Bluebonnet Demo is almost here. This is the other event that we have been waiting for, and it's gonna be a good one. Daniel Miller coming and the Sycamore Creek Ranch is buzzing with folks getting things in order. Daniel has a great demo planned using some not so usual forging techniques and is even using a flypress to construct his "Cruciform Light", which is also the piece you will be forging in the workshop. Monica Coyne will be Daniel's assistant in both the demo and the workshop. If you have not signed up for the workshop, there are still a few slots available. To reserve your spot call Daniel Harrington at 512-549-9601. The workshop is \$125 plus a \$15 material fee. Balcones Forge has purchased four gas forges for this event. Don't miss it. Look for more details in this newsletter.

*President's message continued on page 2.*

## DEMO Date is April 2



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*President's message continued.*

We are also calling for auction items for the live and silent auctions. This is where our operating funds come from. Your annual dues do not even cover the cost of producing and mailing out the newsletter. Your donations help us to put on all our demos and purchase new books for our library. There will tons of tools and blacksmithing equipment up for grabs as well as some very fine hand forged ironwork. The dinner will be catered and there will be lot of free beer. If you have not been to this event before, bring some extra cash and plan on staying late.

As always, we still need your help. We need feedback on everything we do. We need items of interest for the Balcones Forge Dispatch (BFD). We need people to host a meeting and people to demonstrate. We are also looking for volunteers to help with all our events by securing material and tools, setting up and cleaning up after events, and bringing some of your shop tools to our hammer-ins and open forges. Thanks!

See ya'll at the ranch.

Jerry Achterberg  
President Balcones Forge



## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Jeff & Alan Lee's Steep Hollow Forge event on Feb 20, 2016 was another spectacular and well planned blacksmithing experience. Obviously, see-

ing and socially visiting with friends adds to the enjoyment of just being able to attend. My initial reconnaissance of the crowd assured me that this particular forging demonstration and exhibition is getting larger every year, and it's free - how many events can boast that kind of pride. Vendors, exhibitors and demonstrators were in abundance.

After the formal welcome by Alan the demonstrations were underway. John Rigoni started by explaining the forging necessary to make a colonial axe. John has obviously made hundreds of these as he demonstrated careful and precise hammer blows to the iron. The co-demonstrator was Stan Bryant forging a flatter. Again, no wasted or misguided hammer strikes while accomplishing his task. Lyle Wynn was his striker and had already been there all week conducting classes as well. After several hours both forging projects were complete and it was obvious that the crowd was awed. There was plenty of time afterwards for question and answer sessions with dozens of interested individuals.

Before lunch, the auction from which the proceeds help keep this event going year after year was underway. Vince Herod, our esteemed and well known auctioneer began accepting bids for the numerous items available. As typically obvious, certain items generate a dazzling awareness in their presentation form or perhaps the name of the maker. Of course these are such things as hammers, tongs, axes, anvils and the like, then there are the beautifully crafted icons representative of the blacksmithing craft. Often the bid will start at \$25, then \$35 and all of a sudden someone bids \$100 and that's when I think it's sold - wrong, because those kinds of items often reach hundreds of dollars if not a thousand. The auction is as challenging, amusing and educational as any milestone at a blacksmith hammer-in. Great fun and I do like to contribute and encourage others to do so as well.

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The band of Brice Woolard entertained the group and even played some of my favorites such as songs by Merle Haggard (showing MY age -huh). Very good duo! Thanks.

After ample time for lunch and time to visit vendors and friends, the second portion of the day was identifying the winners of the 'Vessel' competition. Because I am so easily awed by the items judged and awards presented, I failed to jot down a single note in this prestigious moment. I had to resort to asking (weeks later) Laura Armstrong for help. She was instrumental in contacting Katherine Karger and Dana Flanders to help me out. Dana also provided some photos of a few of the competition pieces and quoting from Katherine, a verbal description as follows:

First Place was Randy LeBlanc - his was the heavy forged base holding a copper vessel that appeared to have been split then riveted back together.

Second Place was Dana Flanders - exquisite Dana style tediously stitched joinery.

Third Place - Smokey Thompson with a Bedouin style coffee roaster beautifully forged, traditionally joined functional piece.

The second half of the day demonstrations were underway. Will Frary demonstrated making a rose, complete with stem and leaves from horse-shoes. The co-demonstrator was John McGee forging a pair of tongs under the power hammer. Due to travel obligations I was unable to visit with Will or John after their projects were completed. Still need to find out how Will welded those leaves together and as far as John's project, I heard him comment that there is always a little tweaking necessary when the two sides of tongs are put together - so he put the tongs on the anvil, hit it a few times and said "There, that does it!"

I was unable to find out the result of Tom Walker's iron smelt because I left too early, but Jerry Achterberg said he knows Tom and felt sure it was a success. And there you have it, blacksmiths demonstrating the skills that a lot of us yearn for. But in attending these demonstrations, there is always a nugget of advice or technique that seems to help me out considerably.

I should be through my apprentice status in about 60 more years. My carpool guys and I discussed the days events and certainly praised all demonstrators with admiration of the work performed. We all were appreciative of the hard work the Lee Brothers did in putting this event on. Thank you.

## WEB PAGE INFO

Hello Balcones Forge members,

As many of you know, the group web page is out of date. I have offered to help update the groups website for a school project. To help with this update please send some pictures of your recent works to Shane Tilton at:

[flex201214@gmail.com](mailto:flex201214@gmail.com).

If you would like to, please include a short bibliography on how you came to be a blacksmith.

Thank you,  
Shane Tilton





# Bluebonnet Demo

featuring

# DANIEL MILLER

*April 2, 2016*

*Marble Falls, Texas*



**WORKSHOP PIECE**

### A Message from Daniel Miller:

“I find it hard to believe that I’ve been smithing for Forty years now. It’s even more unbelievable—considering my almost humorous internal impediments regarding productivity, and efficiency—that this work provided me with the means (albeit quite meager ones) to raise my three children, and develop the family, which is surely the grounding center of my life. And finally, (and this was least to have been expected) this work has become my major tool with which to assuage an overwhelming curiosity about what we are, and what we might ought to be doing here, and how we might do it better.”

The *Cruciform Light* (shown left) will be created by students during the workshops Daniel is teaching on March 31, April 1, 3 & 4.



**All day workshops take place the Thursday, Friday, Sunday and Monday**

**~ \$140 for members, \$160 for non-members ~**

**10 slots are available for each day - Slots must be paid for in advance to be reserved!!**

*Please contact Daniel Harrington to reserve a slot - (512) 549-9601 or o2bdaniel@gmail.com*

*Indicate your preferred workshop day along with a second choice, if any.*

*Workshops fill up fast, so get registered ASAP.*

**Send payment to: Daniel Harrington, 3101 Wells Branch Pkwy, #934, Austin, Texas 78728**

*(make checks out to Balcones Forge)*

Free camping spots are available around the pond on beautiful Sycamore Creek. Bring your tent or trailer and your fishing pole! Spring is a great time to be out in the Texas Hill Country under starry skies! **Please no dogs and no campfires!**

Don't miss the barbeque dinner Saturday night followed by our famous annual Balcones Forge Auction. Please create items and find unused tools to donate and prepare to bid on fantastic creations and blacksmithing tools.

Our hosts are **John and Carolyn Crouchet** at their beautiful **Sycamore Creek Ranch**.

Directions: **From Austin:** Hwy 71 northwest to Hwy 281. **From San Antonio:** Hwy 281 north to Marble Falls. Cross the Colorado River into Marble Falls, count 5 stoplights and turn right (east) at Ranch Road 1431. Go 5.6 miles and look for the “Anvil” signs. At our gate, you will see a small sign to the right that says, “Sycamore Creek Ranch, 5828 East Ranch Road 1431.” If the gate is open, just drive in. If the gate is closed, there are cattle in this pasture, so please close the gate behind you. Continue crossing 4 cattle guards before you see the big metal shop on your left. Welcome! **Lost? Call John at 830-798-3710**



**Questions? Need Accomodation info? Just want to chat? Contact:**

**Jerry Achterberg** (210)842-3049 or [treefarm@swbell.net](mailto:treefarm@swbell.net)

**Daniel Harrington** (512)549-9601 or [o2bdaniel@BalconesForge.com](mailto:o2bdaniel@BalconesForge.com)

**DON'T FORGET YOUR SAFETY GLASSES AND CUSHION.**

**HELP US BY REGISTERING EARLY!!!**

# Sixteenth Annual Balcones Forge Demo

## *It Just Keeps Getting Better*

Saturday, April 2nd, Balcones Forge will present artist/blacksmith/metal sculptor Daniel Miller, demonstrating his own unique style of forging graceful, beautiful pieces that draw the eye and tickle the mind. ***Many of the people who asked us to bring Daniel to Texas tell us that his work changed the way they think about blacksmithing.***

We are striving to continue our long tradition of bringing you the best of the best in blacksmithing, always showing exciting and different tools and techniques, new methods and viewpoints, and presenting things you have never seen before! This will be an experience to remember.

Our popular hands-on forging classes are also being held again this year. This is your opportunity to learn directly from Daniel Miller, working to his design. There is a limit of ten students per class. Classes run all day. At this time, there are still places available in the Thursday, March 31st class and in the Monday, April 4th class. Call or email Daniel Harrington (512-549-9601 or email [o2bdaniel@gmail.com](mailto:o2bdaniel@gmail.com)) to reserve your space. Sign up for a Thursday or Monday class and plan to spend the day between class and the demo hiking around the ranch, enjoying the Hill Country and beautiful Marble Falls, instead of rushing back to the city.

Daniel Miller ([millermetalsmith.com](http://millermetalsmith.com)) will be assisted at the Saturday demo and in all forging classes by his very accomplished aide, Monica Coyne ([monicacoyneartistblacksmith.com](http://monicacoyneartistblacksmith.com)).

The demo and classes are being held once again at Sycamore Creek Ranch, just east of Marble Falls on FM 1431. This puts you just five miles from Marble Falls, home to more good restaurants and fancy little shops than you can imagine! This a welcoming town, full of antiques and history, brimming with interesting, fun things to do for the whole family. This is the home of the world famous Bluebonnet Cafe, Lake Marble Falls, and it is just six miles south of Longhorn Caverns!

At the ranch, we will have free camping around the big pond on Sycamore Creek. Bring your travel trailer or tent. Plan to see dark, starry skies out in the Texas Hill Country and enjoy the amazing Texas bluebonnets. Our recent rains will make this a banner year for our famous bluebonnets. Bring a camera!

Welcome to the Hill Country and we hope to see you at the demo!

*John and Carolyn Crouchet  
Sycamore Creek Ranch*



## Balcones Forge 2016

March 31 – April 4 – Bluebonnet Demo – Sycamore Creek Ranch – Marble Falls, Texas  
Workshops Thursday, Friday, Sunday & Monday  
Demonstration on Saturday – Daniel Miller & Monica Coynes  
No “Trade Item” – Make something nice to support the Auction & Balcones

April 30 - Mary Jo Emrick – Welding techniques – Georgetown, Texas  
“Trade Item” – To be announced

May Annual Country Swing Music Festival – On the Square  
“Trade Item” – To be announced  
Date to be announced

June Jim Schmidt is looking into the Tech Shop located in Round Rock, Texas

July & August-These two months are usually too hot to forge in Central and South Texas. We are again looking into a “Field Trip” type of meeting. This time we are hoping to get a guided tour of the Institute of Texas Cultures. Remember, it is air conditioned (YEAH!)



Jim Elliott takes a well earned break with his grandsons, Broden Elliott and Kenneth Elliott. Together, they spent three weekends setting up the Balcones Forge pallet rack and building bolt-on footings for the coal forge pallet system.

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Vince Herod, Editor

### Buenos Aires and Beyond: Cooperative Blacksmithing

A recent cooperative blacksmithing work trip to Buenos Aires, Argentina, was an opportunity to meet fellow smiths and forge new relationships.

About 25 blacksmiths from the United States and Argentina -- and one from Russia -- worked side-by-side from March 3 - 6 in Plaza Irlanda, a lovely Buenos Aires park. We all pitched in to work on the sculpture designed by Timofey Silich of St. Petersburg, Russia. A secondary sculpture was built as well.

The organizer of the trip, Jerry Coe, is a member of the California Blacksmith Association (CBA). Last year, Jerry and other CBA blacksmiths hosted Fabian Rossi, an Argentine blacksmith. For several weeks, Fabian toured and worked in their studios. Wanting to reciprocate and re-introduce blacksmithing to Argentina, Fabian helped organize this recent trip.

For a complete overview of the attendees and intentions behind this volunteer-driven initiative, please go to [www.RestorationCraftsmen.org](http://www.RestorationCraftsmen.org).

\* \* \*

As for me and my interest in cooperative blacksmithing, I consider this trip a starting point, not an ending. I look forward to being in touch with my new friends.

I'm already scheming to design some type of sculpture -- a cooperative sculpture of sorts -- where each smith makes a component. Once each element of the sculpture has been made, we'll gather together at a designated time and place, assemble the sculpture, then install the piece somewhere in the wilderness. It might never be seen by anyone except those of us gathered there at that time...

Having a communal project to focus on is a way to keep in touch. If you're interested in joining in on this caper, please be in touch! -- Laura (laura@LauraArmstrong.studio)

## **DON'T MISS THE 2016 AUSTIN FORGING COMPETITION!**

This one-day event in east Austin will feature nine teams of two smiths each, working as master and striker to produce a piece of artwork that they have designed specifically for this competition. There is no artistic theme, so we have no idea what the contestants will make -- we just know it'll be creative, heavy, top-notch forging that will be a lot of fun to watch.

Some of the competing smiths are Haley Woodward, Colby Brinkman, Pat Quinn, Dan Neville, Jake James and Anton Standteiner.

The event is also the inaugural kick-off for the host shop, Community Forge. Community Forge is part of Mobile Loaves & Fishes' Community First! Village. Evan Wilson, who runs the shop and will be competing, teaches basic blacksmithing skills and products to formerly homeless folks, empowering them to earn an income by giving them 100% of the profit from all sales.

Doors open at 9am and the competition will start promptly at 10am. Admission is free. Don't miss it!

### **DIRECTIONS TO SYCAMORE CREEK RANCH**

From Austin, Take Hwy 71 and go north and west. You will pass through Bee Caves, over the Pedernales River, through Spicewood, over Double Horn Creek, and eventually come to the turnoff to the right to Marble Falls at Hwy 281. Depending on where you start from, it'll be about 60 miles. If you start from Vince's place in Bastrop, it'll be twice that!

From San Antonio, Take Hwy 281 North all the way to Marble Falls.

When you cross the Colorado River into Marble Falls, begin counting stoplights. The fifth stoplight you come to will be Ranch Road 1431. This is the biggest intersection in town. Turn right (east) onto Ranch Road 1431. (Check your odometer. You will go 5.6 more miles to our gate.) As you head out of Marble Falls on 1431, you will notice that you are on a winding, two lane blacktop road with no shoulders. At the top of a long, winding hill, the road changes and suddenly has shoulders. Go fifty yards further and turn left into our driveway between the red reflectors. (Look for the "Anvil" signs.)

At our gate, you will see a large oak tree to the left and a small sign to the right that says, "Sycamore Creek Ranch, 5828 East Ranch Road 1431". If the gate is open, just drive on in. If the gate is closed, then there are cattle in this pasture, so please close the gate behind yourself once you enter.

Continue on down our driveway for one mile. You will cross four (count 'em...FOUR) cattleguards before you see the big metal shop on your left.

Okay, for you folks who want to come in from somewhere up north: Just take Hwy 29 from Georgetown (or wherever you get on it) and head to Burnet. At Burnet, take Hwy 281 south to Marble Falls. In the middle of Marble, turn left (east) onto Ranch Road 1431 and head for



..... AUSTIN .....

# FORGING COMPETITION

..... 2016 .....

ONE DAY  
18 ARTIST  
BLACK  
SMITHS

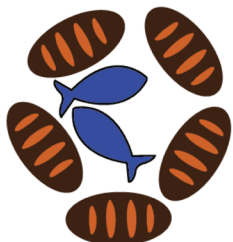
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LIVE MUSIC  
**FOOD**  
YARD GAMES



INFINITE  
GLORY  
TO THE  
VICTOR

.....  
TINY HOMES  
**GOATS**  
AND MORE!

SATURDAY, APRIL 9TH  
10 AM - 6 PM



Mobile Loaves & Fishes  
Serving Goodness.™

Community First! Village  
9301 Hog Eye Road  
Austin, TX 78724

FREE ADMISSION



## TREASURER'S NOTES *(or My Two Cents)*

By Daniel Harrington

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It seems a bit too early in the year for Spring Fever, but that's exactly what I'm seeing in the Central Texas Blacksmithing community. There's just so much going on, it's hard to keep up. After another great Rustyk Forge meeting in December, we rolled into the hands-on coal fire workshop with William Bastas, and then the Lee brothers outdid themselves, once again, with a tremendous 2016 Combo Demo. The house was packed, lots of public presence and new faces, along with old friends from far and wide. Balcones Forge signed up eight (yep, count 'em - **8**) new members during the Demo. In addition, we had 50 current members make it out to Bryan on Saturday!

The silent and live auctions helped to raise nearly \$4000 to offset the significant costs of putting together such a great event – which is free to attend. Heck, Jeff and Alan might even have enough left over to split a cup of coffee!! Thanks go out to them for sponsoring such an important event. It is always a great time... did I mention there was free beer?!?! If you haven't made it out to Bryan for the Combo Demo, go ahead and mark you 2017 calendars now... this is NOT an event to miss!!

While the demonstrators were showing off their skills, there was lots of Balcones Forge business going on, as well - collecting Member Dues (**yep, it's that time again!**) registration for the Bluebonnet Demo (on April 2) and, of course, filling up the slots for the Daniel Miller workshops. There are a total of 40 slots, and a dozen of them were reserved on Saturday... and, YES, before you ask, **Friday, April 1 is FULL.** (*Although there is a rumor that one slot may open up in the next week or so... no promises!!!*) We still have slots available for Thursday, Sunday and Monday, but we must have payment to hold these. This may be your last chance to learn from Daniel Miller without leaving your backyard! Take advantage of it now!! In addition, Daniel has asked Monica Coyne to assist him with the workshops and demo. If you don't know the name, **you should!** Monica's work has been featured multiple times in The Anvil's Ring, as well as Hephaistos 2014 and Ironwork Today 4. She is excellent!!

See some of Monica's beautiful ironwork at <http://www.moniacoyneartistblacksmith.com/gallery/>

To reserve a workshop slot, please contact me at (512) 549-9601. I can let you know what days have slots remaining and any other details you need regarding tools, start time, etc. The classes are \$140 each, plus you need to be a current member. Unless you've paid in the last few months, chances are you renewed around this same time last year, so your dues are likely... well... DUE! Reservations can be penciled in via phone or email request, but payment ensures your spot. Make checks payable to **Balcones Forge** and mail them to me:

Daniel Harrington  
Balcones Forge  
3101 Wells Branch Pkwy #934  
Austin Texas 78728



Workshop project for this year's  
Bluebonnet

by Daniel Miller



# Down in the Grinding Gears...

## *How the Bluebonnet Demo Really Works*

What's really going on behind all those smiley invitations to come live it up at the Bluebonnet Demo every year? Answer: More than you might think!

Sure, we all love a great demo. Blacksmithing courses through our veins! However, you can just look around at the demo and see that a lot of people spent a lot of hours getting this extravaganza off the ground. Those are not happy blacksmithing hours, spent hammering hot iron. No, those are hard working hours, spent moving heavy equipment, building tools for the demo and classes, setting up chairs and tables, moving bleachers, fetching and cooking food, answering telephones and emails, working with caterers, porta-potty deliveries, and picking up the garbage. (And, believe me, there is plenty of garbage!)

Everybody who thinks about this - and a lot of people do - eventually comes up with the same two questions: Why do you bother? What do you do with the money?

### ***Why Do You Bother?***

Because we promised. In our Balcones Forge bylaws, the stated purpose for Balcones Forge, the reason for our existence, is "to educate ourselves and the public." This is our biggest effort each year to make that promise come true. We hope that all of us, you, me, and every person who attends, leaves with a deeper, truer understanding of our ancient craft and everything that goes with it.

In addition, this event is our big fundraiser of the year. That is why we always beg you to bring something for our auction and bid for auction items like you were helping a great cause, because you are!

### ***What Do You Do With the Money?***

The very first thing we do with the money - and there is a lot of it - is pay for the demo. Obviously, we paid to rent those tables and chairs and porta-potties. We paid for the food. We paid the caterers. We paid for the bottled water, sodas, and snacks that are handed out all day. We paid for the propane, the coal, the iron, and even the bleachers you sat on.

Bringing in the best demonstrators in America is not cheap. (I bet you knew that!) We pay airfare for our demonstrators (who always seem to live far, far away) and we pay airfare for their assistants. We pay to feed them. We pay their daily rate, which compensates them for closing their shop, preparing for the demo, and all the things they must do to be ready for our big day. We pay for the special tools they need to show you their magic. It all adds up.

Finally, with what is left, Balcones Forge starts giving money away! We give scholarships. We help put on other demos that will further our mission. We buy the iron and the coal and supply the labor and often the tools for celebrations and festivals at the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg, at the old forge in Zilker Park, Austin, at Mission Espada in San Antonio, at the Buggy Barn in Bulverde, at "Up the Chisolm Trail" days in Georgetown, and for numerous other events, large and small, that will educate our members and the public.

If this sounds like a tall order, well it is. Balcones Forge takes in and puts out a lot more money and a lot more effort than you might think. It is how we do what we do and how we keep making Central Texas blacksmithing better and better, year after year. We hope you will join us for our famous Bluebonnet Demo and for all the other projects we will tackle this year and in years to come.

*John Crouchet*



John Rigoni



Stan Bryant



John McGee



Will Fray





The winning vessel by Randy LeBlanc.



The bands entertains at lunch.

Lyle Wynn strikes for Stan.

Photos by Vince Herod





# Bluebonnet Demo ~ Saturday, April 2, 2016

featuring **DANIEL MILLER**

## REGISTRATION FORM

**\*\*Please register by March 15\*\***

**Make check payable to:** Balcones Forge

**Send to:**

Daniel Harrington  
3101 Wells Branch Pkwy #934  
Austin, TX 78728

Current Member .....	\$45	_____
2016 Membership .....	\$20	_____
Membership with Printed Newsletter .....	\$25	_____
Non-member Admission .....	\$65	_____
Saturday Lunch .....	\$7	_____
Saturday Dinner .....	\$15	_____
<b>Total</b>		_____

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I prefer a hard-copy of the monthly newsletter mailed to me. I have added \$5 to the normal \$20 annual membership fee.

**PLEASE READ AND COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING RELEASE FORM: FORM MUST BE SIGNED AND DATED BY EACH MEMBER, GUEST AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF ANY MINOR IN ATTENDANCE.**

In consideration of the Balcones Forge Blacksmith Association providing demonstrators and workshops and making these events available and granting permission to enter the area of said event, I, individually and as parent or guardian of the minor child attending such event, hereby waive all claims for damage and/or loss to my person or property, or the person or property of such minor child, which may be caused by an act, or failure to act of the Balcones Forge Blacksmith Association, its officers, directors, agents or employees and the hosts and demonstrators. I understand that there are inherent dangers in blacksmithing and I assume all risk of all dangerous conditions in and about such demonstration and workshop and waive any and all specific notice of the existence of such conditions. By signing this waiver, I acknowledge that I have read and understand this waiver.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Vincent Herod  
Spotted Dog Forge  
166 Granite Road  
Paige, TX 78659-4922

