

Vol. 2, No. 1: Mar 2026 [FAMILY]

Backstreet Community Arts

ZINE

& ART & POETRY & CRAFTS & FICTION & ESSAYS &

CONTRIBUTORS

WRITERS

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Robin Blake is a lifelong artist, writer, and fashionista. She is a talented pet care specialist at PetSmart and hopes to be an author someday.

Marianne Heames is a Clay Artist, Storyteller and Teacher. She comes from a family of artists and sees life through lenses of Hope and Light.

Danny Maldonado is a poet, storyteller, and wood carver, writes poetry, science fiction, and fantasy. He shares his work at dreamsmithcodex.substack.com.

Lucy Maldonado is a retiree born in NYC and currently living in Georgia. She has had a myriad of jobs from secretary to ESL teacher. Among her pastimes are arts and crafts and writing.

Corbyn Niese is a writer, dancer, and visual artist originally from Ohio. She works in aviation and spends her time exploring movement, travel, and creative expression.

ARTISTS

Lindsay Behrens is a long-time Newnan resident and collector of cozy hobbies. Lately she dabbles mostly in watercolor, ukulele, embroidery, and her growing houseplant collection.

Robin Blake (see above)

Katie Brewer is a lifelong artist who grew up in rural Maine until the age of 14. She enjoys baking, cosplay, and loves to read — preferably with a cat!

Faith Farrell spends her time at Backstreet Arts and Newnan Theatre Company. Her column “Getting Frank With Faith” can be read in Coweta Magazine.

Marianne Heames (see above)

Dale Lyles is the coach of the Backstreet Arts Writers Group and the editor of the *&... Zine*.

Kim Ramey is a mixed media artist who hangs out at Backstreet Arts. She is trying to learn to play the mandolin. (She's also the founder of Backstreet Arts.)

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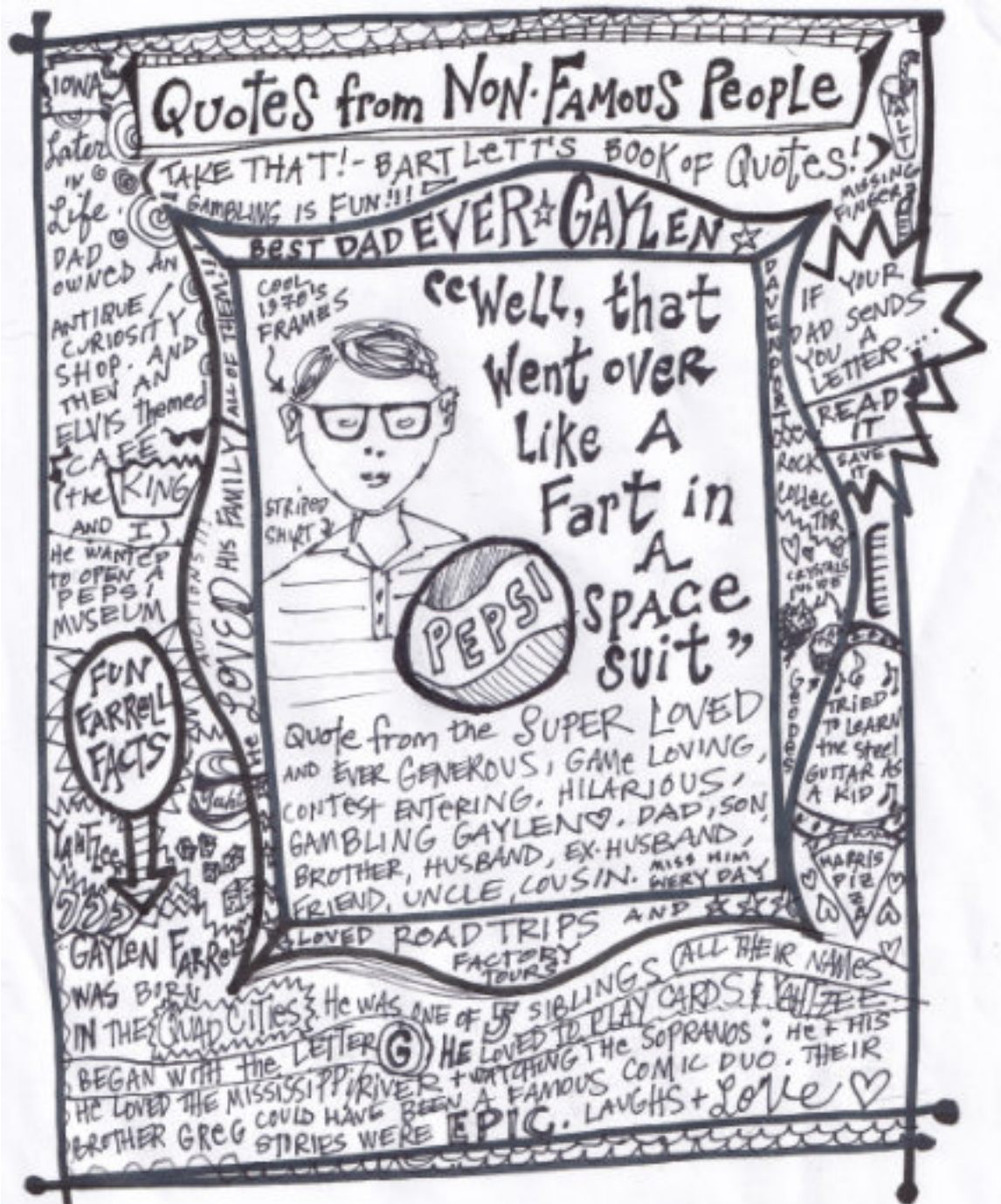
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The *Backstreet &... Zine* publishes four times a year. The theme of this issue is **FAMILY**; many submissions this issue reflect this theme.

The theme of the June issue will be **PROGRESS**.



Quotes from Unfamous People — Faith Farrell

The matriarchal story teller

When I married my husband some 48 years ago, I knew I would have to be up for “never a dull moment” with all of my wonderful, funny, quirky in-laws. Our most outstanding character was my mother-in-law, who while she would say she didn’t believe woman should wear pants made it clear that she “wore the pants” in the family. She believed that the family was ultimately answerable to her. She was, after all, the family’s CEO.

She expected her children to call her once a week. Should that not happen, no worries. The fault lies in their spouses because they didn’t remind her children to call. Should they call her, the perfunctory greetings would suffice since she would be doing most of the talking. Should you forget your participation was minimally required, she would say “atento”, meaning “pay attention” (to her)! I distinctly recalled a moment when she spent several hours relating a story to me (there are no short stories with her), and I started to doze off. That’s when she “atentoed” me. My husband once caught her holding someone’s hand while relating one of her stories. He could tell the nonparticipant wanted to escape but was “restrained” by the gentle hand of his mother. My husband was able to adeptly rescue the young woman by diverting his mom’s attention to a family member with greater expertise in these matters. Throughout my mother-in-law’s life, we experienced a myriad of amusing idiosyncrasies with a chuckle or two. In all of this the salient characteristic above all was the preeminence of love. She made us smile!

She was immensely loyal to her family and that fealty was of an inherent nature. It was sacred. If you did not possess it, you could not possibly be related. I truly treasure her and miss the “never a dull moment.”

— Lucy Maldonado

Our Family is Like a Tree

Our family is like a tree with many seasons of growing. In the Springtime of beginnings, new branches birth forth, tender sprouts that have many needs but are the delight of the mother tree. Summers follow with growing seasons like memories blowing through the branches and swirling around the trunk of camp fires, fireflies, hiking, kick ball, frolicking playtimes and picnics in the shade. The green dancing leaves offering respite for the parent tree while it keeps vigil over the young ones. Fall arrives bringing a harvest of fruit loops, colorful activities surround our tree with drama, sports, music, studies, jobs and crisis of many varieties. Then the colorful leaves slowly fall to the ground piling up into mounds for jumping and sounds of laughter. The rains follow and the leaves break down, like residue of life and memories to become nourishment for the inner life of the family tree. Quiet enters and the Winters of barrenness set in, nothing appears to be growing, all is gray, brown and cold. but deep inside development is happening in a rapid rhythm, readying itself to burst forth into life in the next season. Look! The Springtime of blossoms are arriving! The cycle begins, over and over and the tree grows taller and becomes stronger.

Still, there are seasons of discontent, when the Arborist must be called upon to tend to the tree. After storms, branches weaken, sometimes fall, and pestilence sets into the hollows, disease happens, but the Arborist is constant in its care and compassions and the tree overcomes and strengthens even more. The roots of our tree intertwine to this day in lasting and life giving relationships that offer support to the aging tree and comfort to those who come and sit under its branches. Today, squirrels frolic chasing each other around the trunk and fly from branch to branch. Birds of all colors and beaks create nests chirping and singing the song of the woods. Humans come often and “forest bathe” under our tree and the wind blows through its leaves and branches whispering, “be grateful”.

—Marianne Heames



Whose Family Tree Is This? — Marianne Heames



Rage — Kim Ramey

Winter Haze

How cold the winds of winter blow, how stings her gnawing bite.
How still the trees, how gray the skies, and bleak the hollow nights.

I find no snow 'cross yonder fields, the land sits frozen black.
An icy grave with every step as bones and sinews crack.

Black clouds have gathered o'er my soul, and fog consumes my mind.
I wander through the winter haze, unsure of what I'll find.

But brightly does the sun now shine, and warmth revives my bones.
The winter's gone, the spring begins, and I say "welcome home."

— Robin Blake

LOTTERY TICKET

I won the lottery last week.
I don't know why I was surprised—
I've always believed I was going to be rich.
Never questioning my destiny for it.
But there's something about seeing the winning numbers
that changes everything.
Instantly, playing mental gymnastics.

This is great.
I've always wanted to quit my job.
But I'd get a part-time one, of course—
something I'm passionate about,
something to keep me sane.

How will my finances work now?
I have to be smart.
How much will I need to keep working part-time?
How much to maintain this new rich lifestyle?

Because of course things are going to change.
I'm rich now.
So is this really how I want to live?
Is this where I want to live?
Is this what's best for me now that I'm rich?

How will my day-to-day life change?
Who do I want around me?

And my family and friends—
I'm so excited to tell them.
Maybe I'll surprise them.
They'll be so happy for me.
Happy for themselves.
This kind of abundance spills over.

I've always known I'd be rich,
but it's crazy how your head spins
even when you've dreamed of the moment forever.

I thought I'd be prepared.
I thought I'd have it all figured out.
But I didn't.

And when I saw those lottery numbers,
I had imposter syndrome.
Me?
The time had finally come.
It was my turn to be rich.

But my wealth was short-lived
And my lottery ticket turned into blood,
and my blood turned into a miscarriage.

Imposter syndrome is gone now, right?
Everything back to normal.
No need to stress about finances,
career, living situation, family.
The day-to-day.
No decisions need to be made.
Nothing changes.

Except I'm no longer rich,
and there is blood on the floor.

I've never been good at getting out those stains.
I've never been good at convincing myself
that I didn't really lose anything.

I barely knew what it was like to be rich.
Didn't even get a real taste—
just an idea of it.
Just the beginning of a life I thought was mine.

Just enough to know
that I am no longer rich

- Corbyn Niese

Necklace



Space always reminds me of growing up in Maine, able to see the band of the Milky Way on clear nights, and of lying on the hood of our rental car when my mom and I got to visit the Grand Canyon. It was full dark on our drive back to where we were staying, and we stopped in the middle of the desert to stargaze away from any light pollution.

We froze our butts off out there, but it looked so incredible we just couldn't stop looking!

So space reminds me of my mom, and childhood, and nothing says family more than that, to me. :)

The necklace is made of a variety of beads in natural stone, as well as a few made of glass, metal, and plastic. On the back is a cheeky little UFO, abducting a triceratops.

— Katie Brewer

Reading a Hulucination

This
story
needs
illustrations.

Hiding naked underneath a food truck is hardly a good beginning. Sounds a lot more like the beginning of the ending to me, but you have to start somewhere. The hot asphalt bonding with my skin gave me an idea. This is starting to sound like a soliloquy. Sequencing sequins seems sordid at best but, that's how my mind feels. I had to hide.



So
illustrate
it.
Please.

The smell of the food truck should hide my scent, but they know where I live. They have been eating my mail.

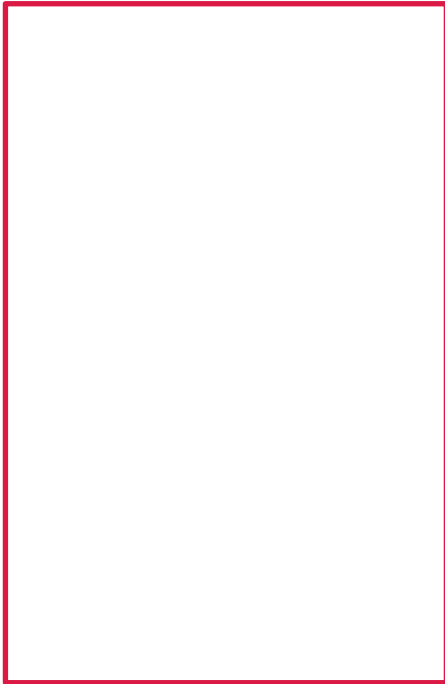
Well, that's still not right. They call me Bob. It's not my name, but it still what they call me. I should probably start there, but too late now. I have outsmarted the system.

I'm a private investigator,

I'm so private that no one knows I exist. At least until yesterday when there was no mail in my PO Box. Instead just a coupon for a free

Marked like Cain. Doomed by a curse no one could name, he walks the earth forever to be hated and feared. He knows what it's like to be alone. Don't let the false sense of confidence fool you. He really has no idea what's going on. They say that constant pain is easier to get used to. I don't know who they are, but I do know, they suck.

That's when the stewardess shook me awake. That was the wildest dream. Man, my head is killing me. This is the worst hangover...either that or I have a Björk song stuck on repeat in my skull. I don't remember a flight, but maybe that's just the jet fuel fumes. Okay! The stewardess is yelling at me. Apparently I can't stay here; they are waiting on me to leave before they can board the plane. Board...plane. Lumber humor. Blah, blah, blah, something about air marshals. I wasn't listening. I was trying to find my smokes. I found my lighter. How did I get this on the flight? How did I...wind up in handcuffs. Geez!...these guys are tough.



Occam's razor wasn't quite cutting it, so he knew, it was time to break out Occam's chainsaw (patent pending). He had run out of tricks and was beginning to feel helpless. What to do? She no longer recognized him and he hardly remembered her anymore. Her

illustrations by _____

middle name? He knew it a moment ago. Mary, Martha, did it even start with a M? Why was he fixated on her name?

Don't ask me. I'm just the narrator. How should I know?

Back to the Bad Egg headquarters. It's a shell company. It is also the birthplace of bad ideas, hatching of supervillains, doctorate programs for regular villains, and a ranking system for the more regimented types.

— Robert Thompson



Mug — Dale Lyles

A simple kitchen talk over coffee
To bring us together
In the morning, before the afternoon sun

A simple talk over a bedside
To keep us together
During their final run

A simple talk over a grave
Will keep us together
After life is done

Soil settles
Love lives on

— Daniel Maldonado

The Family (aka My Clan)

Oh how wonderful my life is
Not to brag about it too much
It's not all about what I can do,
but it's who my life has touched.

It's not about precious jewels or gems
It's not about the money.
It's more about the heart felt love,
And relationships as sweet as honey.

It's not about the bloodline
That grew up in each day.
It's more about the loving heart
That takes my breath away.

It's not about always knowing
Just the right words to say.
It's more of an understanding
That we can click in some great way.

I know we may not look alike
Or even share a mother.
It doesn't matter what is said
You will always be my brother

Your skin, your culture, or even a
pronoun
Does not matter to me at all.
My GOD created each one of us
To join hands and stand up tall.

So I'm thankful for my relationships
They all mean the world to me.
This clan that I'm a part of
Makes me happy as can be.

So choose your own clan wisely.
No one is better and no one is less.
Create a unit that feels like home.
With blind love and trust, you'll past
the test.

— Rhoda June Baines



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BACKSTREET COMMUNITY ARTS

Backstreet Community Arts exists to provide a safe, welcoming, creative environment to anyone who may benefit from the healing power of art and community.

Study after study proves that Art has a positive effect on the mind, body and soul.

Backstreet Arts reaches out to adults who may not be aware of or have access to the proven healing power of art: those who have experienced trauma, illness, or grief; veterans; homeless and limited-income individuals who cannot afford art classes, and anyone who wants to practice art in a comfortable, non-intimidating, inclusive atmosphere.

Backstreet is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. We believe that Art Saves Lives...because it saved ours.

19B First Ave, Newnan, GA (behind Bridging the Gap)

<https://backstreetart.org>

On the cover: "Family," by Dale Lyles