

Life in color



by **Brent Sclafani**

Very few people would choose to be defined by their medical status, and my sister, Barbara Gurman, who has primary-progressive multiple sclerosis, is no different. She has long said that she is a human being who has a disability, not a disabled human being. Over the years, she has come to rely on her art and poetry to express her joys, her challenges, her humanity. Several years ago, she self-published a book of poems titled *Purple Awakenings*. Now 70, she spends her days in bed, and the only movement she still has is in her left arm. When she could no longer write or paint with her right hand, she began using her left to paint on postcards.

Poem by Barbara Gurman

Golden streaks of light
stream through;
filling my lashes
with wispy threads of color—
lemon, rose, the sky
gently floating, expanding,
stilling my breath
momentarily,
until these morning rays pass,
and my visions go within
to be remembered always.

One day, Barbara and my daughter, Emilia, developed the idea to pair these small canvases with poems excerpted from her book, creating a set of inspirational greeting cards, which she calls “Just Be” cards, to share the lessons she’s learned in life.

With the help of my daughter’s friend—a professional graphic designer—the first set of cards was printed. Each card has a different painting and poem inside. Barbara has been producing these cards for two years now, and sells them in packages of 10, donating 100 percent of profits to the National MS Society.

Brent Sclafani lives in South Burlington, Vermont. His sister, Barbara Gurman, lives in New York City.

For more information about Barbara Gurman and her cards, visit justbecards.com.