



Welcome Back, Poet Barbara Ehrentreu!



Recent Recipient of the Inaugural  
Indian Independence Day Honor Award!



**Sally from the Norwalk Public Library:** Welcome back to the **Poetry Page**, Barbara! It was only in July that you last joined us:

### **OUR INTERVIEW WITH POET BARBARA EHRENTREU**

Since then you have been awarded the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary **Indian Independence Day Honor Award!** Congratulations!! Please tell us in detail about this award.

**Barbara:** First of all, thank you for featuring me on the **Poetry Page** a second time! The **Indian Independence Day Honor Award** is in its first year. It is the first time the two groups— The **Gujarat Sahitya Academy** (which is a government institution headed by Dr. Vishnu Pandya), and **Motivational Strips** (headed by Shiju H. Pallithazheth)— decided to create this award. They gave it out to 350 people from 80 countries. Only 30 people from the Untied States received it.

The criteria for this award were:

- Literary Excellence and Global inclusion
- Active participation in Global Literature through *Motivational Strips* family
- Writers who take time to encourage fellow writers
- Writers who share literary articles of general communication
- Writers who uphold integrity of Indian literature ethics and code of conduct
- Writers who value core values of authentic writers unions, and government institutions
- Prominence of a writer through global search engines such as google, bing, etc.

**Sally:** How did they find you?

**Barbara:** I have been a member of *Motivational Strips* for almost three years, during which time I became the Regional Director for the West. The awards committee administered the award to people based on literary merit. They took into account the accomplishments of each writer, and checked their backgrounds thoroughly. I am very well known and respected on *Motivational Strips*, and have helped Shiju H. Pallithazheth on a few writing projects. In the past few years, I have received other awards from the forum. In February, 2020, from the Government of Urubamba, Peru, I received the **Premio Mundial A La Excelencia Literaria**. In 2019, from *Motivational Strips*, I received **The Order of Shakespeare Medal**. Also in 2019, the **World Poetic Star** was awarded me from World Writers Union, in addition to the **Ambassador of Literature**

award. I am sure they also took into account my winning short screenplay, my two published YA novels, and my award winning poetry book. I have also posted a lot of my work on the Facebook page for *Motivational Strips*, and have acted as a judge in several contests. If you are interested in learning more about the award or seeing who received it, please click here:

### THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY HONOR AWARD

**Sally:** You are the regional director of *Motivational Strips*. Please tell us about *Motivational Strips*, what it is and who can take part. How did you come to be regional director?

**Barbara:** *Motivational Strips* is a writers' forum, which is now affiliated with several other forums and governments. This group was created around the idea that all writers need a safe place to write, and that world literature needs to be protected. We have only a few rules, and most of the members adhere to them.

I was approached in 2018 by Shiju H. Pallithazheth, who was a friend of mine on Facebook. He sent me a message asking me to join his forum. He told me that there was one thing they never did on his page, and that was to criticize any work. I had been a member of many poetry groups, and criticism was something that was regularly done. Members would give suggestions for other members to change their work, or they would say negative things about the work. So Shiju decided to start a group that would not allow this kind of criticism on the wall. Anyone can post their work, and if a member feels that corrections are needed, they are encouraged to contact the writer personally on Messenger about it. Only good comments are allowed, and there is a profusion of congratulations and hearts and flowers on the wall.

The forum has become very large. As it grew, it needed more and more people to approve posts, and to keep the page running smoothly. We don't allow violent photos or hate speech or very political poetry that might antagonize someone in the group. There are moderators, administrators, supervisors, and regional directors as well as the forum director and the leader. At present there are over 13,000 members and we get 7.6 million visits a month. In addition to the Facebook page, there is a magazine that members can post to, or their work might be selected to be included in the Bharath vision magazine. We are affiliated with World Writers Union, Kazakstan, Gujarat Sahitya Adademy, Union Hispanomundial De Escritores of Urubamba, Peru, The Sultanate of Oman, and there will be more soon. There are so many different countries and languages that all announcements go out in several languages.

I became very active on *Motivational Strips*, and so as we grew and expanded, I was made Regional Director of the West, which includes the United States, Mexico, Canada, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. There are several other Regional Directors for the other regions. There is one for UK and Europe, and one for East Africa and Central Asia.

**Sally:** I understand the *Greenwich Sentinel* did a write-up on you. Do you have a copy of that that you could share with us? What other papers are covering your story?

**Barbara:** Yes, actually I sent a press release to several places, and it was picked up by The *Greenwich Sentinel*. Here is a copy of it. Please scroll to page 7.

### [Barbara in The Greenwich Sentinel, Scroll to Page 7](#)

A reporter from *The Stamford Advocate* interviewed me, and she also interviewed one of my daughters. She asked me to send her some poems, and a photo. I have no idea when the article will be running.

**Sally:** This must give you such a lift during the pandemic! Were you at all expecting this award?

**Barbara:** Yes, it gives me a huge lift!

When the award was first announced, I didn't think I would be selected! Then, when I saw my name—I couldn't believe it!

At first, I didn't understand the importance of it. There wasn't any real fanfare anywhere about the other awards I had received in the past. So, I just thought it was really nice that I won the award, and I printed the certificate and felt really great about it.

Then, I started seeing all the stories coming out globally, and discovered it was a bigger award than I thought! So, I put out a press release—not thinking any paper would print it—and the *Greenwich Sentinel* printed it!

**Sally:** That's so exciting, Barbara.

How will this award change your life as poet? Or otherwise? Do you find that people are reaching out to you—people and poets that you hadn't known before?

**Barbara:** I guess what it does for me mostly is validate me as poet and writer. Being honored by a government is a huge deal, and this award has been publicized all over the world. I think it's a great day for literature when poets get into the paper!

Nothing has changed in my life, and I am still living in this pandemic with all that it entails. So far, only the reporter from *The Stamford Advocate* has reached out to me. I have noticed that more people want to friend me on Facebook, but otherwise nothing else has changed. At the moment, I am very busy anyway. But I am open to anyone or anything new all the time!

**Sally:** And here you are—back on our Poetry Page!

Please share with us anything else about your experience with this award, your feelings and thoughts. You must feel such joy and gratitude! The Norwalk Public Library is so happy for you!

**Barbara:** As I said, winning this award has given me a lot of joy. I have been awarded an honor that has only gone to 349 other people, and only 29 other people in the United States. Writing is so easy for me— especially poetry— that I almost feel it is wrong to award me for something I do naturally. But if they feel that I deserve it, and they went to great lengths to check out my credentials, then I ultimately have to accept the fact that what seems easy for me may not be so easy for other people.

In closing, thank you so much again for honoring me with another **Poetry Page**. It is a joy to be part of The Norwalk Public Library, and I hope to be able to get over there and visit you again in person!

**And now, a poem by Barbara Ehrentreu...**

## Climbing Back Up When You Are Down

*"Nothing is impossible. The word itself says I'm possible."*

*Audrey Hepburn*

When your world has torn into pieces  
too small to think you will ever put them together  
and you find yourself searching for a way  
to bring these pieces back to their shape  
In the weary moments of struggling in your mind  
there is an answer for the determined sufferer

For me it seemed my puzzle would never come together  
because it was missing a big important piece  
one that defined it and without it I thought it couldn't exist  
For how can one exist when a vital part is missing?  
Continually searching for a way to complete what  
felt an impossible task – to put my life back together  
I tried each day to live moment to moment  
Believing if I could get through this one brief minute  
I could go through the next

But my favorite movie star expressed what I needed most  
To hear – it could be done -- for nothing is impossible  
I was still there and though my puzzle couldn't be finished  
the way I wished – I could leave it and move onto another  
for in order to feel more together I needed to have flexibility  
If something didn't work I needed to move on  
I didn't have to depend on only one way  
but I did need to know that continuing on I would achieve my goal.

Many puzzles might come my way  
but I didn't need to solve or complete them all  
In doing them, eventually I would come to see  
what I had thought was impossible come to fruition  
A life devoid of color and light would somehow blossom again  
Like a garden where the flowers had been cut for bouquets  
will once more have blooms growing in a few weeks

I was the bush with my most precious flowers gone but  
the gardener had left the stems and my roots were firmly  
planted in the soil of my home  
What seemed impossible has appeared again -- and now  
these blossoms grow once more  
as I realize the beauty and the fragrance of their presence.

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Thank you, Barbara!



Barbara at the David Hayes Sculpture Garden in Easton, CT

