mum was talking loudly to me to try and cover it up, but I heard. Later on, Beth had to go into isolation while she was given drugs that would lower her white blood cells so much that she could not see anyone in case she caught an infection or disease. Even in isolation she managed to catch an eye infection and her eye blew up like a cherry for a few days.

She finished her treatment around the same time that I did, but last year they discovered the tumour again on a scan and she went under a second bout of chemo. I felt guilty and sad, and was afraid to see her in case she'd hate me for being so lucky as to get on with life as normal again. But she was just the same as always, very bubbly and talkative.

That treatment didn't work either and she was told that that they must amputate her right arm, where the cancer had spread some more. That was the last time I saw her, when my family took her and her mum out to lunch a few days before her operation and I was, again, quite apprehensive as to her opinion of me. But she was full of energy as usual, racing around with my younger brother and talking about her visit to the Paul Newman camp for children with cancer, which she had been chosen to visit.

When she came back from her holiday six months ago, she was soon told they had found, in her scan, that the cancer had spread to her lungs and stomach and when I heard that news I knew she was dying.

Just before Christmas she did die and the news of her death affected me deeply. I feel very guilty that she has died and not me. I went to her funeral. I found it very hard to do. While I was there I felt that I had swapped places with Beth and I suddenly felt like it was me who was suffocating in that coffin and that Beth was standing where I was, singing her favourite hymn. It sounds very strange but it was a very real experience. I also began to wonder who would have come to my funeral if it had been me. Whether Beth would have come or not, would she have cried as I was crying? I was frightened to face her family who might hate me for surviving when Beth did not.

What bothered me most of all though, is that I never said goodbye. I never let her know that I was still there for a chat on the naivety and ignorance of the people around us, about what having cancer was really like. In fact I had written her a letter after her bad prognosis in which I talked about the Paul Newman camp and told her that maybe we could be counsellors there together when we were a bit older. My mum saw my letter and mentioned that Beth was feeling desperate at the moment and that the mention of counselling might make her sad that she might not live that long. I never got around to rewriting it, and the letter was never sent off and I've always felt so bad about that. Not that it would have made a lot of difference to her, but it was my way of reaching out to her and asking her to hold on.

I always thought she would come out of it successfully but at every turn the odds were against her. Maybe if she knows I'm writing this, she'll know how much I care.

Sutton

by David Shindler

aged 10

She goes remembering
hoping, fearing

She goes with a
quick breath
a quick step

She restlessly waits
heart pounding

Familiar test
Familiar pain

Waiting for results,
going over past pain,
the trauma
Not again!!

Relief, all over
Fine, all worry
Nothing wrong

The fear shan't go
she'll still remember
Next week

*The title of the poem refers to the Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton, Surrey, UK, where David's sister, Amy, was a patient.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Adolescent Suicide and Self-harm: Recent Research Findings. Presentations held by The Trust for the Study of Adolescence. 12 February 1993. London, UK. Details from Nadine Swift, Conference Organiser, T.S.A., 23 New Road, Brighton BN1 1WZ.

Adolescent Suicide and Self-harm: New Approaches to Intervention. Presentations, workshops and discussion groups held by The Trust for the Study of Adolescence. 18 March 1993. London, UK. Details as above.

Positive Care for People with Aids. Two ENB-approved courses for the health care professionals. 15-26 February and 22 March-2 April 1993. London, UK. Apply to The Lantern Trust, 72 Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey EN9 3BS.

HIV and AIDS Awareness. Workshop. 4-5 March 1993. London, UK. Apply to The Lantern Trust, as above.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Michael Perry, in his excellent review of 'Making the Most of a Funeral' (*Bereavement Care* 1992; **2:** 27), speaks of need for 'an address which combines the Christian message . . .', sentiments which are correct for an archdeacon but not for many people in this country who are not Christian. As well as other religious minorities there are many people who have no religious beliefs.

In most funerals there is a need for an inclusive service, one which gives comfort to believers but will not offend those holding differing or no beliefs.

DUDLEY CAVE,
Lay Assistant to the Minister,
Golders Green Unitarians,
31½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS.

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