

a bitter road the bereaved have to travel. They can be helped along it by loving care and the support of families, friends and experts too. They need to talk, weep, shout and rage, endlessly go over and over the events. They need time and space and acceptance in which to go insane. Bereavement is a mad, a crazed state. They need physical signs of loving comfort—an arm, an embrace. And they need these to continue for many months, many years.

In the end we each find our own way of getting through, of surviving the awful business of grief after a

death. Many of my ways are common to most of us. I have talked and cried and raged and consulted the experts. I have written. I have imagined, I have tried to work it out in that way for myself. I continue to do so. But perhaps when I realised that I was alone, when I accepted that I couldn't duck it, that no-one could do my grieving for me, and above all when I faced the fact that yesterday could never be called back, that time would not return—then was the moment, on each separate occasion, when I realised that in the end I would get through it, would survive and recover.

All this may seem obvious and simplistic, but death and grief are obvious and simple things. They are in the end about love. About the relationships of human beings in love and about the breaking up, through the loss of that love and those relationships, by that mighty, terrible, universal thing called death. Death is about isolation, loneliness, misery, grief, separation and pain. It brings all those things in its wake to each of us. But it is also in the end about friendship, closeness, healing, restoration, resurrection. Death and bereavement are opportunities for life.

## OBITUARY

### Susan Le Poidevin

The world will be poorer without Susan Le Poidevin. Every one of the thousands of nurses, doctors, social workers and counsellors whom she trained will remember her as an enthusiastic, vibrant teacher who expected total commitment from her pupils and got it.

Within her chosen field of counselling for people at times of loss, Susan was a pioneer and the Le Poidevin method contributed much that will outlive its originator. Her teaching was the direct outcome of her experience of life, as an opera singer, psychologist and patient (Susan had lost her sight for several months following an accident). From each of these experiences she learned something

important. As a patient she had learned about loss and disablement the hard way, as a psychologist she discovered how to think about and alleviate the pains of loss and as an opera singer to project her personality to an audience in such a way that they found themselves in touch with feelings as well as ideas.

At times this could be painful and Susan herself sometimes suffered as a result of the powerful feelings which her teaching evoked. To the inhibited English her open manner and spontaneity could be alarming but her most overwhelming remarks were always mitigated by affection and the stiffest upper lip was eventually

relaxed by her spell.

Susan lived her life at a level of intensity which could be exhausting and there were times when one felt that she must surely burn-out. She was fortunate in her marriage to Nick, whose steadying influence complemented her centrifugal tendency. All who knew them will wish to offer sympathy and good wishes to Nick and to their daughter, Charlotte.

We shall all cherish the memory of this whole-hearted, brilliant and courageous lady who died as she had lived, bravely facing up to the worst implications of sickness and death.

— DR COLIN MURRAY PARKES,  
MD, DPM, FRCPsych.

### Forthcoming Courses and Conferences

#### COPING WITH SUDDEN DEATH

For people within reach of York, one-day workshops are held at regular intervals. The aim is to provide an opportunity to consider the crisis and process of bereavement from the point of view of the helpers and bereavement counsellors, and to apply the concepts through experiential exercises. Next course 21st February 1989. Course tutor: Bob Wright, Senior Charge Nurse, Accident and Emergency Department, Leeds General Infirmary. Cost: £25. Further details from Summerfield Conferences, Summerfield House, Outwood Lane, Horsforth, Leeds LS18 4HR.

#### WESTMINSTER PASTORAL FOUNDATION

Meeting Point is a series of Wednesday evening meetings in London concerned with psychology, spirituality, culture, community and creativity, and in particular with the interface between secular and religious understandings of human nature and experience. All are welcome whether lay or professional. There is no set charge but a contribution to expenses is welcome. Meetings include: 18th January. In Search of a Soul—an existential approach to counselling. Emmy van Deurzen-Smith. 8th March. Near-death Experiences—an encounter with reality? David Lorimer. Full programme and further details available from the Westminster Pastoral Foundation, 23 Kensington Square, London W8 5HN (Tel: 01-937 6956).

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