

## the short life and death of **my little brother** (2) struggling for breath

Guy Stephen Alderson had been born at my parents' home in Islington, north London, on April 13, 1960. I was two years and two months old at the time and had wanted a sister, not a brother. Later that day, I \_\_\_\_\_ looked pleased, but unexcited, when I \_\_\_\_\_ eyes on my brother for the first time.

Kay Huntington, a close family friend and also our doctor, had detected a heart murmur during her \_\_\_\_\_ examination of Guy. When specialists later examined him they diagnosed a narrowing of the artery that carries blood from the heart to the lungs. If Guy had been born at the end of the Second World War, he \_\_\_\_\_ have been expected to die in his early twenties. By the 1960s, however, many operations on the condition had been performed successfully. Initially Guy was to have \_\_\_\_\_ the operation at two, but it was later decided to wait. Guy's Hospital, \_\_\_\_\_ name understandably attracted my brother, decided that the operation should be postponed because surgical techniques were improving all the time. He \_\_\_\_\_ underwent surgery when he was nearly seven-and-a-half.

\_\_\_\_\_ that time, Guy had enjoyed a happy childhood \_\_\_\_\_, because of his disability, it was not always straightforward. A week after my third birthday, when Guy was 10 months, we moved to Cornwall where my father worked as a \_\_\_\_\_ writer, specialising in economics and politics. My mother, a biologist, took a break from her career as a teacher to bring \_\_\_\_\_ her sons, and we lived in a white, four-bedroom detached cottage in a village called Treveighan, in the north of the county. One of my memories of Guy is his frequent announcement that he was "puffed". Affected by the hole in his heart and \_\_\_\_\_ of oxygen to his body, this meant that whatever he was doing - running, playing football or sword-fighting - was immediately halted.

Guy \_\_\_\_\_ squat and lower his head between his legs until he got his breath back. If he was still \_\_\_\_\_ for breath when it was time to move on, my father would carry him. If we were at school or my father was not about, I would carry him. Although there were only two years between us, I was bigger and stronger than most boys my age, while Guy, because of his \_\_\_\_\_, was smaller and weaker. Carrying him by piggy-back became the norm and I was extremely protective \_\_\_\_\_ him at school. My parents encouraged him to be as active as he could. From an early age, Guy and I used to slide down the steep grass hill at Daymer Bay on surfboards.

**although » apparently » by » condition » eventually » freelance » had » initial » lack » of » set » struggling » up » whose » would » would**