

THE DAY I HUGGED MY LIFE-SAVER

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A LUTTERWORTH child has finally met the US army major who saved her life by donating his bone marrow. Catherine Sharpe (11), of Spruce Way, her mum and dad Janette and David and brothers Haydyn and Rowland finally met Major Bill Brockman, his wife Kristie and baby Kate.



Catherine was diagnosed with Fanconi's Anaemia in 2000 – a condition where the blood stops producing white blood cells to fight infection and aid clotting – but she was saved by a bone marrow donation from Major Brockman in 2002.

A year after the Anthony Nolan Trust lifted confidentiality agreements so the families could talk, the Brockmans flew thousands of miles to meet the Sharpes at their home.

Catherine, who had a competition with her brothers to see who could spot the family from her window first, said: "I was hanging out the window, going 'he's here, he's here'. I ran downstairs and gave him a hug. It was very emotional."

Catherine, who has always loved all things American, said that when they were first introduced she complimented the military man on his crew cut.

She said: "He was very fit looking and he had a flat-top haircut. I said 'that's a very nice hair cut'. He said 'thank you very much Miss Catherine'."

Catherine and the man whose blood she shares have always wanted to meet, but because of confidentiality agreements that take years to lift the Brockmans had always been 'Mr and Mrs Donor'.

The restrictions were lifted at Christmas and two months ago, the Sharpes invited the American couple and their baby girl to visit.

They spent nearly a week visiting tourist attractions in the area, including Warwick Castle and Blenheim Palace near Oxford.

Catherine, whose family had never been churchgoers, felt compelled to join Lutterworth Methodist Church several years ago and often prayed her donor was well and that she would meet him one day.

Mrs Sharpe, who praised the couple's warmth, kindness and good manners, said:

“On the way back, Bill showed David his army tag and on the other side it said his religion was Methodist. It was strange. Catherine had always been so drawn to the Methodist church.”

In an interview with Major Brockman last year he told the Mail that despite Catherine living “half a world away” he felt a special connection with her and urged others to join the bone marrow register.