

4/5/89  
**RAY  
KERRISON**



**SHERRY NEUSTEIN**

**S**HERRY Neustein is an 8-year-old girl who, according to medical testimony, is in danger of becoming the city's next Lisa Steinberg.

The little girl, at the center of a long custody battle involving allegations of neglect and sexual abuse, was taken to the Kings County Hospital emergency room last Thursday and found to be suffering from a series of ailments which, with further deterioration, would have claimed her life.

## Another Lisa Steinberg horror?

Price said: "On physical examination, I found Sherry to be seriously malnourished. The child was among the very worst cases of pediatric emaciation I have ever seen. She weighed only 44 pounds fully clothed — about 16 pounds under normal weight."

The pediatrician said that, if the child had lost an additional 10 pounds, her life would have been placed in "serious jeopardy."

Sherry Neustein's fate, first reported here March 13, is becoming a test case of the scandalously inept conduct of custody and sex-abuse issues in family and other courts. Her mother, Dr. Amy Neustein, and her father, Dr. Ozzie Orbach, a medical doctor, were divorced in 1982. The mother was granted sole custody.

Four years later, the father was accused of sexually abusing Sherry, then the mother was accused of "brainwashing" the child. The courts set more than 50 dates hearing the allegations against Dr. Neustein, but the sex-abuse allegation against Orbach was dismissed without even investigation.

Jeremiah McKenna, counsel for the New York State Senate Crime and Correction Committee, examined the case and found it outrageous. "It taxes one's restraint to comment calmly on this case," he said. No matter, little Sherry Neustein was taken from her mother and placed in foster care for 16 months.

## 'System' still has time to save her

Last November, her father was awarded sole custody when all parties agreed she was in the bloom of health. Today, according to court testimony, she looks like a "starving Biafran child."

The day after Sherry was taken to Kings County, her father ordered her removed to Brookdale Hospital Medical

Center, where she remains. Orbach told Price that he had taken the child to his family's pediatrician a month before, and Sherry was referred to a psychiatrist for treatment of anorexia nervosa.

Dr. Neustein's attorney, Julia Helt, went to the Appellate Division yesterday seeking a show-cause order demanding, among other things, that Brookdale be restrained from releasing Sherry to her father without the consent of the pediatric department's director.

Helt said: "Sherry's life is in grave danger. She had to starve herself to draw attention to her plight. This gesture, which almost cost her her life, was no doubt a scream for help to a system that has badly failed her. Next time, it may be fatal."

The court granted a temporary restraining order so that Brookdale cannot release the child until a full determination is made of the entire application.

It's not for me to determine the rights or wrongs in this custody struggle, but it is apparent to everyone — and conceded by everyone — that Sherry Neustein now has a serious health problem. What is stupefying is that the system of courts, government departments and agencies seems to lack the energy or interest to get to the bottom of this case and resolve it in the child's best interests.

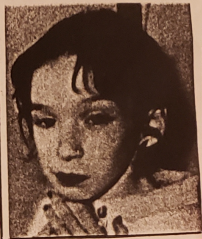
For now, her well-being should be the court's paramount concern. If anything happens to her (when admitted to Kings County last week, she threatened suicide) there will be no alibis for anyone. The whole record is available.

Unlike Lisa Steinberg, Sherry Neustein has not fallen through the cracks. The system has presided over her every move. It thus will be held accountable.



*Happy child before illegal Removal from MOTHER*

*Sept 1986*



*NOW deathly ill*

*New York Post - page 2*