

And Finally...

They say a pic is worth a thousand words. What does yours say about your special moment? **Here one reader shares the story behind her favourite photo**

Every picture TELLS A STORY



Sebastian, me and Hermione

Sitting at the kitchen table with a cuppa, having a quiet moment to myself, I had a thought.

What shall I do for my birthday? I wondered.

I was approaching the big 6-0. Even though it was a milestone, I wasn't fussed about doing anything special.

'Age is just a number,' I'd tell people who asked if I was worried about getting older.

And I was proud of how much I'd achieved.

As well as being a mum of two children, Sebastian and Hermione, I ran my own business, regularly attended military-style boot camps, volunteered with Samaritans and was even a qualified pilot.

But Hermione, who was about to turn 21, had an idea.

'Why don't we do a skydive?' she suggested. 'It'll be a great way to see in our big birthdays!'

Realising what a fabulous idea it was, I immediately said, 'Yes!'

I looked into skydiving experiences nearby and, after doing my research, I got in touch with one to book tandem skydives for us.

A week before the big jump, I was on a skiing and hiking holiday in Norway with the kids when I asked Sebastian if he wanted to join in.

'I'm not sure,' he said, and



Me

his reluctance made me question what I was doing.

Am I going to regret this? I wondered.

But talking it over with a friend reassured me.

'It'll be fine,' she said. 'It's so safe. And think how much fun you'll all have!'

And when we got home to Stroud, Gloucestershire, Sebastian decided he did want to join us after all.

So I booked him in, and a few days later, on Mother's Day, we made our way to the airfield.

I thought I'd feel terrified, but I was ready and raring to go.

'Let's do this,' I said to the kids before we took off in our plane.

As we ascended to 13,000ft, my skydiving instructor strapped us together.

I watched as Hermione and Sebastian went first, one after another.

'Are you ready?' the instructor asked me, as he

edged us towards the door.

'Ready!' I said, and we leapt out of the plane.

As we began to fall towards the ground, I couldn't believe I was really doing it.

I was skydiving!

It felt so exhilarating – like nothing I'd ever experienced before.

We were freefalling for 45 seconds before my instructor pulled the cord on the parachute.

And minutes later, we landed safely.

Sebastian and Hermione had landed before me, and ran over to me for a hug.

'That was amazing!' they both said.

'I think I want to go again!' I laughed.

We took our gear off, and then went and celebrated with a Mother's Day lunch.

As we tucked into our food, we couldn't stop talking about what we'd just done.

'I think I want to be a

skydiving instructor now,' Sebastian said.

'I'm definitely doing that again,' Hermione added.

I never expected us to love it so much.

I can't get enough of being up in the air. My next goal is to get my glider towing licence, so it won't be long before I'm back in the sky.

A friend and I are also looking at flying around the world together at some point.

When my feet are on the ground, I spend time as a coach and trainer, helping people tackle conflicts and resolve disputes in everyday life.

They say you should slow down as you get older – but nearing 60, I'm the busiest I've ever been!

From Penny Newton-Hurley, 59

● To find out more about Penny, visit for.you.compassion.co.uk