



I'm an adren

After taking up abseiling at 90, **June Fenn**, decided her next challenge needed to go even further - literally 10,000 feet further...

Sitting by the fire with a ball of wool and a pair of knitting needles? No, thank you! That's definitely not my style. I might have just celebrated my 92nd birthday on 20 June, but I can promise you I have absolutely no intention of slowing down - if anything, I'm speeding up!

I moved to Alton in Hampshire about 30 years ago, after working as a children's nanny in Froyle for 16 years. I've always been single, I never had children, and sadly my brother passed away 10 years ago. Then, just before last Christmas, my dear sister closed her eyes for the last time too. When you lose your family, you realise just how precious life is. These days, I rely on my wonderful circle of friends at the Alton U3A - one of many groups around the country that provide learning, skills and fun opportunities in the area - and I keep myself busy volunteering at the community fridge in Farnham.

I've always been fiercely independent, sporty and completely fearless. When I was younger, I swam a mile to raise money for someone travelling to Australia, and I took on the Great South Run when I was 70! I used to love walking holidays, and I've always fancied trying wild swimming. I suppose I've just got a bit of a bloody-minded competitive streak in me.

My wild adventures all started on my 90th birthday, when someone suggested a charity abseil down the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth. I thought they said it was 100 feet. It turned out to be 100 metres - that's over 300 feet! People kept asking me: 'Aren't you terrified?', but I just laughed. I had all my sponsorship money lined up, so I didn't really

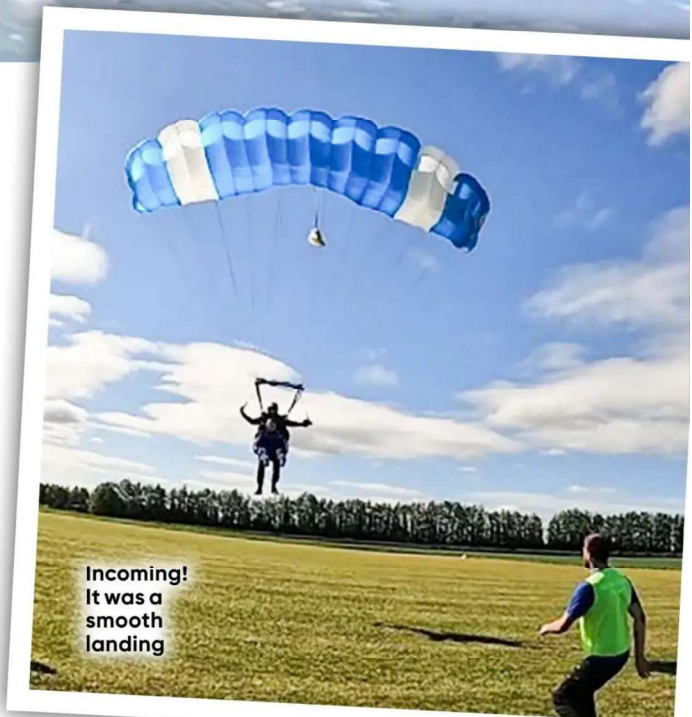
have a choice! My parents raised me to believe that if you say you're going to do something, you bloody well do it!

While I was waiting at the top of that tower, I got chatting to a charming man in his early 80s. He told me he loved adrenaline rushes and regularly jumped out of aeroplanes. A little seed was sown in my mind. I thought, well, if he can do it at his age, so can I! Abseiling had been wonderful, but facing the wall meant I couldn't see much of the view. I decided a skydive would be a whole different kettle of fish.

I officially signed up in February. Because of my advanced age, I had to go for a proper medical assessment. They asked all about

If there's one thing I've learned

'I've had a jolly good innings, and I've got nothing to lose by saying yes to the next adventure.'



aline junkie at 92!

The skydive and the views were emotional



have absolutely nothing to lose.

The big day arrived on 11 May. We drove down to Old Sarum near Salisbury, and the weather was perfect – crisp, bright and beautifully clear. We had to be there by 7.30 am, and my two dear friends who came along to watch were shaking with nerves for me. ‘Are you sure you want to do this?’ they kept asking.

But I wasn’t frightened for a single second. At 9 am, the plane took off.

When the door opened at 10,000 feet, the wind howling around us, I didn’t hesitate. I strapped myself to my lovely instructor – who had cameras mounted on his wrist and helmet to capture the madness – and tumbled out into the open air.

The freefalling was simply magnificent! The rush of the wind, the absolute freedom. Then came a little jolt as the canopy opened, and suddenly we were floating. Looking down at the beautiful British countryside stretching out like a patchwork quilt beneath me was deeply emotional. I was smiling from ear to ear the entire way down.

Best of all, my crazy leap through the clouds raised over £2,000, to be split between two incredible local charities that mean the world to me. Half is going to Dementia Friendly Alton. My sister suffered from dementia, and I’ve seen first-hand the magical difference their tea afternoons and dinner dances make to lonely people.

The other half is going to Dogs for Autism, a wonderful charity that came to speak to us at the U3A. They’re the only charity in



She abseiled down Spinnaker Tower

“
GET OUT THERE AND LIVE YOUR LIFE - ENJOY THE BUZZ!
”

the UK that trains and provides assistance dogs completely free of charge to autistic people of all ages. These dogs perform bespoke tasks that help their partners build independence and feel less alone in the world. Knowing my jump will help change lives makes every creak in my joints worth it.

People keep asking me what my next challenge is going to be. Some friends suggested wing-walking, but standing on top of a moving plane doesn’t really tickle my fancy! I tried microlighting (jetting off in an ultra light-weight plane) over Anglesey a couple of years ago but it got rained off, so I’d still love to give that a go. Or maybe even motor racing!

I really don’t know what the future holds – at 92, I might not even be here next year! But right now, I am bursting with energy. I want to encourage everyone, no matter their age, to get out there and live life to the full. Get on with it, enjoy the buzz, never let a number hold you back!

my blood pressure, which I’ve taken tablets for over the years, but I passed, signed the disclaimer, and paid the £450 fee myself, so every penny of sponsorship could go straight to charity.

Just a few weeks before the jump, I gave everyone a scare when I ended up in hospital for two weeks with severe stomach pains. Thankfully, it turned out to be a false alarm. I told myself, it’s just an age thing, June – get on with it! I’m fighting fit and I’ve had a jolly good innings, so I

There was no holding June back...



...and she received a certificate.



● June is supporting two charities: Dogs for Autism (dogsforautism.org.uk) and Dementia Friendly Alton (dementia-friendly-alton.org.uk). Visit their websites for more information.