



Julie's Skydiving Story

On October 20th 2010, I had one of the most fantastic experiences of my life!

It was a cold but bright sunny morning with an almost cloudless blue sky when my son Nic and his partner Gill took me to Langar Airfield on the Nottinghamshire Leicestershire border where I was to do a tandem skydive to raise funds for Mesothelioma U.K.

I was doing this because my husband of 51 years had died in June that year from Mesothelioma, the horrible cruel disease for which at this present time, is no cure.



Shortly after arriving at the airfield I signed in and had my documents checked including the medical form signed by my G.P. certifying I was physically fit although many of my friends questioned whether I was mentally fit having decided to jump out of an aeroplane at the age of 72.

I met up with Sarah, who had been given the skydive as a 21st birthday present. Together we had a 15 minute briefing about what we should do during the dive, and explaining there was a second parachute in case the first one failed to open and in the event that the instructor should collapse there was a computer in his backpack that would open the chute.



Suitably reassured but worried I would not remember my instructions we together with six other trainee divers made our way to the plane. It reminded me of the time Sandy and I had flown up the Hudson River in New York in a similar plane, the difference being that one had seats whereas on this one we sat on the floor. I needed not have worried about not remembering my instructions because throughout the climb Dan my instructor reminded me of what I should do.

We rose to 12,500 feet with the other divers leaving the plane at different heights. It was amazing to watch their different techniques, one young woman simply walked out of the aircraft. I had elected to be the last to leave, and after watching Sarah's cameraman balance on a very narrow ledge by the open door to film her leave the plane securely strapped to her instructor, it was my turn.



Having donned helmet and goggles, and being firmly attached to Dan, we shunted along the floor like caterpillars and sat in the doorway, moments later we were falling through the cloud with arms and legs outstretched. My initial thoughts were "my god why am I doing this" but within a few seconds I was enjoying the thrill of descending through the cloud at, I'm told 131 mph. I can honestly say it didn't feel as if I was travelling at such speed, it just felt as if I was floating gently downwards but it was incredibly noisy. After 40 second's there was a slight jolt and the parachute opened to reveal a beautiful landscape bathed in sunshine. The view was awe inspiring; over to the west I could see the city of Nottingham and beyond, and eastward was Leicestershire and Rutland with Rutland Water shining like a mirror in the far distance.

Dan let me steer the chute and pointed out interesting places as we slowly descended towards the ground. After about 7 minutes of floating through the air being enthralled by the beautiful scenery below us I spotted the plane taxiing along the landing strip and seconds later my feet were firmly on the ground.

As we neared the ground I had the horrible feeling I was going to be sick. My first thought was I can't be sick they're videoing this what an embarrassing moment that would be, so I told Dan who told me to take some deep breaths which, much to my relief worked so I landed safely back on terra firma with my pride intact and feeling 10 feet tall.

I'd had a grin on my face from take off to landing and would very happily immediately done it all again.



As it is, I'm planning another dive sometime in the spring as Nic my son plans to do one too, so I will be looking for sponsors once again. I raised an amazing £2,296 on my first dive and although I don't expect to raise so much next time I will be contacting all my friends who I missed last time. If anyone reading this would like to sponsor me they can do so on my Just Giving page J.lightfoot@justgiving.com