My true-life story

Baby on BOARD



The special delivery

Sonja had seen countless hours of *One Born Every Minute* – but when her own midwife moment arrived, would she spring into action, or take a back seat?



Me, Shelby and Mason



Noah, Shelby, Mason, Ryan, Sophie and Lexi

Pacing up and down the corridor, I watched as hundreds of doctors passed by. None of them were the one we were waiting for.

'How have we not had an update yet?' I muttered to my son-in-law Ryan.

My daughter Shelby's baby was a week overdue, and she had been taken into theatre to have her waters broken.

As we waited to hear from her doctor, Ryan and I sat in anxious silence, every minute feeling longer than the last.

Then, suddenly, my phone rang. It was Shelby.

'They can't go ahead with the procedure,' she sighed.

'You're joking,' I gasped.

Poor Shelby had been in the hospital all day. Apparently they couldn't break her waters in the evening, and now it was too late. After checking the baby's heartbeat, Shelby was allowed home, and told she'd need to come back the following morning. Luckily, we lived just 10 minutes away from each other, so I could get to her quickly if I needed to. Ever since she was little, Shelby, her younger sister Jade and I had always been close.

'I really think the baby is coming'

Shelby had given birth to her first child Sophie nine years earlier, when she was 16.

Although I never expected to become a grandma at 37, I did everything I could to support her.

The same applied when she went on to have her second daughter Lexi a year later.

After Shelby split with the girls' dad, she met Ryan. And together they had little Noah, now four.

Nothing made me happier than my three beautiful grandchildren and now, all I wanted was for grandbaby number four – another little boy – to arrive safely.

That night, I was woken at 4.22am by a call from Shelby.

'I'm in labour,' she panted.

The plan was that she'd leave her three children with my husband, Brannon, while Ryan and I went with her to hospital for the delivery.

When she got to mine at 4.40am, we pulled the kids out of the car and took them inside. But then Shelby got out from the passenger seat and crouched down.

'Mum, move the car seat, please, I'm going to have to get in the back,' she groaned in pain. 'I really think the baby is coming.'

I jumped into action and moved the seat, then called for an ambulance and passed the phone to Ryan.

Shelby crawled into their red Vauxhall Zafira and laid on her back with her legs towards the door.

As I leant over her from the pavement, panic started to set in.

This baby is coming now, I fretted. *And I'm the one in charge.*

'Is she breathing?' the operator asked over the loudspeaker of my phone.

'Yes, she's giving birth!' I cried. 'Just send us an ambulance.'

OK Sonja, this is your chance to put all the hours of watching One Born Every Minute into action, I told myself.

I was a big fan of the TV show, and I tried to remember what I'd learnt from it.

'Can you see the baby's head?' the operator asked.

I pulled Shelby's baggy shorts to the side.

'No,' I replied.

But as soon as I put her shorts back in place, things escalated.

'It's coming!' she cried.

I looked again and I could see his head.

'You need to support the baby's head,' the operator explained.

But as soon as I put my hands around him, he shot out into my arms.

'Oh, my goodness!' I exclaimed.

It had all happened so quickly. There was no panting or breathing from Shelby. He was just suddenly there.

Ryan was trying his best to stay calm, but understandably, the poor love was a nervous wreck.



Baby Mason

The baby, who they had already named Mason, was so slippery, and slid around in my arms. It was cold and dark, and I was so worried about him being born outside.

'You need to clear his airways to make sure he can breathe,' said the operator. 'And make sure you have towels to clean him up and keep him warm.'

'You need to clear his airways'

Ryan ran to my front door and started banging on it.

That's when Brannon realised what was going on and came outside to help.

Shelby kept falling asleep due to exhaustion, but the operator said I needed to keep her awake.

But as I looked around me and saw so much blood, I started panicking.

'Is the baby crying?' the operator asked.

He wasn't making a sound.

In the pitch dark, I could make out that he was starting to turn a funny blue-green colour, and I noticed he wasn't breathing.

'Come on, baby,' I cried, rubbing his face to clear his airways.

Then, I realised there was some kind of taut covering over him.

My hand slipped over his features, and it had a slimy sheen, as if his face was vacuum packed.

'What is this?' I said, confused.

Brannon shone a torch on Mason, and I realised he was still in his amniotic sac.

Immediately, I ripped it off with my hands.

Then he took in a massive gasp of air and let out an almighty cry.

'Oh, thank God!' I said, letting out my own sigh of gratitude.

Just at that moment, the ambulance arrived with its siren blaring, and I was more than happy to hand everything over to them.

It was now 4.53am. And thankfully, after the paramedics had checked over Shelby and Mason, they told me they were both safe and well.

Hearing that, I just broke down in tears.

For a moment there, Shelby and Mason's lives had been in my hands.

Now that they were safe and I could relax, all the worry and relief came pouring out.

'Well done, love,' Brannon said proudly.

He hoped to give me a hug, but noticed my hands were covered in blood and gunk, so patted me on the back instead.

Then we were quickly whisked off in the ambulance. I stayed with Shelby, while Ryan followed in the car.

Twenty minutes later, we arrived at Barnsley Hospital where little Mason, who weighed 8lb 5oz, was cleaned up.

My nanna duties continued when I had the privilege of dressing him and putting his nappy on, while Shelby got some well-deserved rest.

Soon, they were both allowed home, and Mason's siblings couldn't wait to meet their baby brother.

When Shelby got Mason's birth certificate, she had to note down the name of my road as his place of birth.

I've since found out that babies born in their sac – also known as 'en caul' or 'mermaid' births – are rare, and affect only one in 80,000 births.

They mostly happen in Caesarean section or premature birth, so we have no idea how this happened to Shelby.

Mason is now seven weeks old, and is doing really well. He is constantly following his mummy with his eyes, whereve she goes.

Bringing Mason into the world may have been terrifying but it was also the proudest moment of my life.

It truly was an extra special and speedy delivery!

Sonja Coc
Grimethorpe, South Yor



Me

Shelby told that's life!,

'I'm thankful that my mum did what she did to save Mason's life and deliver him safely. I've now got two boys and two girls, but this was the craziest birth. But he's doing really well now. He's been brilliant.'