

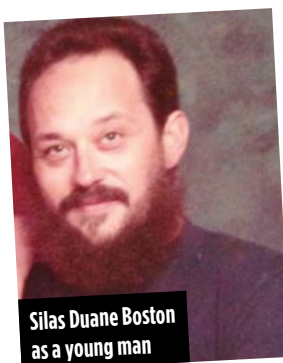
I tracked down my BROTHER'S KILLER

After almost four decades of grief, Penny Farmer was determined to get to the truth

Watching Chris race around on his motorbike, wearing his leather jacket, I thought he was the coolest big brother anyone could ever have. At 17, I idolised him, always begging for rides on the back of his Yamaha or sneaking into his room to listen to his Jimi Hendrix records. He was eight years older and it never occurred to me he wouldn't always be there, until he was suddenly gone, without warning or explanation, throwing my life off course and taking me on a 38-year quest for the truth.

It was December 1977 when Chris, a trainee doctor, then 24, set off backpacking with his childhood sweetheart, Peta Frampton, 24. They'd been together since they were 14 and, both adventurous types, I knew they'd have an incredible time, but it didn't stop me sobbing as Chris hugged me goodbye on our parents' doorstep in Wilmslow, Cheshire.

'Make sure you look after them,'



Silas Duane Boston as a young man



After a lifetime on the run

Chris winked, looking over to our dad, Charles, 65, and mum, Audrey, 52, who was trying not to cry.

Adventure of a lifetime

Every few weeks, a letter would arrive from Peta, and hearing about their adventures made the oceans between us feel smaller. After three months in Australia, they explored the South Pacific before travelling to Mexico, and in May 1978, Chris sent a tape of him saying happy birthday to our older brother, Nigel, 28. 'He sounds happy,' I thought. Then, in June, Peta wrote from Belize about a 'larger than life' American sailor called Silas Duane Boston they'd met in a bar, who'd offered to take them to Honduras on his sailing boat, along with his two sons, Russell, 13, and Vince, 12.

We eagerly awaited her next letter, only nothing ever came. Peta's family heard nothing, either, and as the

weeks went by, the more we worried. Mum seemed to age overnight, and each morning, once the postman had been, she'd rush downstairs, her face dropping when she saw the bare doormat.

In September 1978, we reported Chris and Peta missing. Dad called the foreign office, the consuls in Central and South America, and spoke to local

journalists, but with no real idea of where they were, it seemed fruitless. I missed Chris so much I'd sneak into his room at

night and wrap his leather jacket round my shoulders.

Then in February 1979, I arrived home from college to find my parents crying in the front room, and between sobs, Dad told me two bodies had been found

off the coast of Guatemala. Local officers needed Chris and Peta's dental records to confirm it, but the police were sure it was them. They'd been brutally tortured, bound, with plastic bags sealed over their heads, before being thrown into the sea to drown, their bodies weighed down

'TWO BODIES HAD BEEN FOUND'



Penny waited nearly 40 years for answers

Penny's brother Chris and girlfriend Peta were childhood sweethearts

boomed one day, slamming the phone down after another dead end. But, back then, there was no internet and Guatemala was a country stricken by violence, so there was little help from the authorities and the case went cold.

I went to university, became a journalist, married my husband, Ben, and in 1990, we had Alexandra, followed by Charlie in 1993, and Freya in 1996. But my grief never lessened, and as my children grew up, I thought of the wonderful uncle stolen from them. Dad never gave up, and when the internet arrived, he sent emails to anyone he thought could help, yet in November 2013 he died of old age, never having got any answers.

One day, in October 2015, I was on a dog walk with Mum, by then 90, when I asked her what she thought Chris would look like now. 'He'd still be handsome,' she smiled, and suddenly I couldn't stop thinking about his killer.

In a flash, I had an idea. Back home, I searched Facebook for Silas Boston and gasped as a profile appeared. He was an old man, living in California, but I knew I was staring into the eyes of a killer.

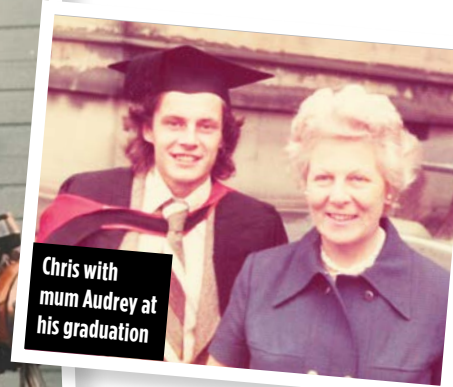
I went to Manchester Police, who agreed to speak to their counterparts in California – who, coincidentally, had just reopened the case into the disappearance of Boston's third wife. It also emerged his sons had tried to alert various authorities that they'd witnessed their father murdering Chris and Peta in Guatemala, only Boston couldn't be found, so nothing was done.

with engine parts. Unable to process the barbaric nature of their deaths, we prayed the bodies belonged to some other poor couple – only, after two months, it was confirmed. My brother and his girlfriend had been murdered.

Killer on the loose

We knew nothing would ever be the same again. Mum fell apart, crying one day and silent the next, while I was in denial, expecting Chris to come through the door at any moment.

Dad channelled his pain into searching for answers, hounding local authorities and demanding information on Silas Boston, the boat owner we'd last known them to be with. 'I know it was him,' Dad



Chris with mum Audrey at his graduation

Yet with his health failing after a lifetime on the run, Boston, 76, had returned to California, where a carer had set up a Facebook page for him – the one I'd found. After

38 years, Silas Boston was finally arrested. In March 2016, Mum, Nigel and I met officers from Greater Manchester Police, who had witness statements from Boston's sons, and Mum told them to spare no detail.

The end of a long wait

We learned Boston had previously been charged with rape, and after savagely attacking and tying up Chris on the top deck, he attacked Peta in the cabin. Chris suffered a fractured skull and other broken bones, yet still tried to comfort Peta, telling her it'd be OK, even when they were trussed up about to be thrown overboard. The details were hard to hear, and we shed many tears, but we'd waited a long time to know how my brother died, and it was heartwarming to know he'd comforted Peta at the end.

But in April 2017, while in custody awaiting trial for murder, Boston died of suspected suicide, and we felt cheated after our long wait for justice. But then Boston's son, Russell, 52, contacted me – and, thinking that it might give me closure, I flew to America in July 2017 in order to meet him.

'Dad was beating me, Chris stepped in and saved my life,' he said, explaining what he'd seen that day. It'd caused Boston to turn on Chris and Peta instead,

but I couldn't blame Russell, he'd just been a terrified child at the time, and I'm grateful to him that I finally have the truth. It still sickens me that a monster like Silas Boston was allowed to roam free, but

at least now I know my amazing brother died a hero, and while we never got justice, my mother, 94, has answers to the questions that haunted her for 38 years.

*** Dead in the Water by Penny Farmer (£8.99, John Blake Publishing), is out now**

'I FINALLY HAVE THE TRUTH'