

The Pauline Project

December 2020: 21 years ago the Pauline Project was born. It lasted until 2005.

Every year we are blessed with receiving Christmas letters from friends containing 'catchup' information. As a tribute to this tradition and let's face it, a bit of a stitch up, in 1999, decided to invent a character, Pauline, and proceed to share her news to various friends. A sender's address was never enclosed and on many occasions the help of others was invaluable to post from interstate and in some cases from overseas. It was important not to cross over friend groups as it would be discovered who the common dominator was and would be found out. I did have grand plans that my obituary should read...Farewell from me and farewell from Pauline...however I have decided to ditch that plan and hopefully give you some light entertainment over the Christmas period. All the characters and circumstances are completely imagined and you may note Pauline is not always diplomatic, is a tad naïve and somewhat shallow. As far as gaining any feedback from those who did receive these letters...there were a few confused queries, but on the whole it was left for us to have a giggle and imagine the questions and mystery that baffled.

Life is too short not to have a laugh!

Here is a run-down of the characters involved.

Pauline -	35-40 Single. Ex-boyfriend Tony wants her back, travels frequently. Vague job description. Plays squash and takes aerobics.
Dad- Kevin	Stills works - President of cricket club, plays keyboard in Jazz band.
Mum - Elsie	Worried about Pauline not marrying, worried about all kids
Grandparents	Always travelling - 80 years old adventurous
Nana (Mums)	Worries about everything
Leon & Nora Brother & Sister-in-Law	Young newlyweds, battlers... Nora wants kids, Leon doesn't
John & Michelle Brother & Sister-in-Law	John accountant - makes chessboards and is in choir, Michelle knits - Son named Jack - rebel
Maureen & Paul Sister & Brother-in-Law	Hippies - building composting toilets and mud bricks - son Drummond and daughter Sarlin
Trev & Gary Step Brother & Partner	Gay yuppies
Connie - Friend	Active, single and main travelling partner.
Bem – Friend	Popular with blokes - divorced, works with Pauline
Tony – Ex	Ex-boyfriend broke up a year ago desperate to get her back. Followed her overseas and surprised her. Scared of Kevin and Bob
Bob - Ex	Ex-Fiancée eight years ago - soul mates. Getting married
Dale- Boss	Rich playboy - plays with Bem, Ex-wife Kathy

Christmas Letter 1999

Hi folks, it's that time of year again where the festive season is upon us and the New Year (or should I say millennium) looms. I hope my yearly written correspondence finds you all well and happy. It's certainly been a topsy-turvy year with never a dull moment.

It was fantastic to catch up with some of you during the course of the year. Connie and I spent March and part of April in Europe where we were able to catch up with a few of you. We'd have to travel forever to catch up with all of our friends! This was a fantastic holiday. Skiing, hiking, culture, had it all! Although Tony surprised me in Venice as he turned up once again in my life. I haven't mentioned this to Dad or especially Bob. I think Tony eventually got the message. One day he'll give up. Apart from this saga, and Mum's constant worrying with her need for me to contact her at every destination, the trip was fantastic and it was hard coming back to earth once more.

Work. Well what can I say? It's been a busy year once again. Dale has been so busy gaining more and more contracts and putting more and more pressure on all of us to perform. It's a cutthroat business but as you know, he thrives on this and maybe I do too. He still has time for all of his toys though. He's a big kid really. Aren't all men? He's actually been dating Bem which is not unusual but I thought it a bit soon after Kathy. I think it had been going on for quite some time not that you'd know with Bem, as there is always a pair of shoes parked under her bed.

One highlight of the year was Leon and Nora's wedding. We had it at Mum and Dads place. It was actually a beautiful wedding and they honeymooned in Perth after. They're so happy even though they're finding it a bit tough at the moment with Leon's retrenchment. John and Michelle moved up to the Gold Coast in July which upset Mum and Nanna. He was transferred but I think it was partly to uproot Jack who is rebelling in his early teens. Hopefully the move will settle him down. Maureen and Paul haven't changed, as you'd expect. Their little business is actually booming now. He now supplies about a dozen builders with his mud bricks and has employed two people to continue his composting toilet constructions. I don't think being this busy was part of their easy going alternative life style plan but it's certainly working out that way! Life was made even busier with the arrival of Sarlin. She's such a dear and wonderful sister for Drummond. Trevor and Gary have certainly been busy renovating their town house. Gary has been so busy with his fashion designs this year so I think Trev has organised most of the renovations. But he is very happy and enjoys his life style.

Granddad and Grandma never cease to amaze us all. Connie and I were in Amsterdam when we met up with them on their European trip. By the time we returned they were moving on to Africa then India. They'd no sooner arrived home and they're travelling around Western Australia. I wish I had their energy. We've hardly seen them this year.

I'm still teaching aerobics at the gym three times a week which keeps me fit. I can't believe I've been doing this for ten years now. I'm sure it's healthy but lately I've found it rather tiring. I've stopped playing squash so often mainly because Tony takes it too seriously and sees it as a way of getting back together. One day he'll give up. I know if Dad and Bob had their way it would be sooner rather than later. Bob is actually engaged again and is hoping to wed Milly next March. He's very happy and so am I as its time one of us moved on with our lives.

Christmas promises to be a busy and festive time for me. With our family growing bigger and bigger, there is certainly never a dull moment. I hope to have more time off after Christmas and travel to New Zealand with Connie and possibly Bem. We're all planning vigorously our New Year's Bash so look out and don't make plans yet. I'm sure I will catch up with most of you in the coming months but otherwise I hope you are all well and I wish you all a fantastic Christmas and New Year.

Here's lookin' atya
Pauline XXX

Postcard sent from India Feb 2000

Message... 'Amazing place, bet you didn't think I would be riding an elephant!!'

Christmas Letter November 2000

It's nearly time for Santa to make his way across the universe and I thought that for once I would get in early with my Christmas letter. It is actually a nice change to be ahead of time in something. Well no doubt some of you would be up to date with my news but there are some of you who I have been a bit slack in contacting...so here goes.

A major highlight for the year would have to be my trip to India. It was so different than other places I have been to. There are just so many people and they really don't seem to mind living so close together. I don't think I could stand living on top of one another like that. Maybe they should get out in the country more. Anyway I got to ride on an elephant. Its name was Tongo and it did smell a bit, but the ride was fun. A little Indian man led us about and made funny noises to push Tongo along. We also took a trip on a boat kind of thing along the river and that really smelt. The people there wash their clothes and then wash themselves in the water. I hate to think what else they do in the river? It was really hot and they kept telling us to go for a swim, but I didn't like to think what diseases I would catch if I went in, so I avoided swimming. It was interesting to visit India, but to be honest I prefer more civilised cultures. I just couldn't get used to the stench that you couldn't get away from.

Because of the India trip I didn't get to go to New Zealand, but Connie agreed that maybe we could save up and visit there next year.

In the family front, Nora and Leon have just announced that they are expecting a baby next June, I guess Nora must have convinced Leon that having kids would be a good thing. I think Leon wanted to wait until they have more money behind them as he has only just recently found work again. Anyway it means that I get to have another niece or nephew so that's great. John and Michelle have been having a few difficulties as Jack is still getting into trouble. It has really strained their marriage and Michelle has come back home for a break. Maureen and Paul are still making their compost toilets and mud bricks and have expanded into organic pest control pellets. They really enjoy their lives and with little Sarlin and Drummond, they have a great family. I sometimes envy them, but then I think of the things they do without, like having a telly, and think that maybe I wouldn't really enjoy the way they live.

Trev and Gary are still together and they have been hinting of having a ceremony to show everyone how committed they are to each other. I think it will be mainly for their friends. The house they have renovated looks great and I must admit having Gary around to toss some of his designs in my direction is really handy. Mum and Dad are still the same and Grandma and Granddad are still so adventurous. They haven't travelled too much this last year but they have got involved in the Children's Hospital and regularly entertain the children with puppets.

Work is still pretty much the same with Dale still chatting up anyone who breathes and Bem still seems to be the one he focuses on the most. I think they both like playing games. I have stopped taking aerobics as I had been doing it for ages and felt I needed a break. So now I just play squash and ride my bike occasionally.

On the romance front, I think I have finally convinced Tony that I have moved on and that we really can only be just friends. He actually went out on a date the other week, so hopefully that will work out and he can pester someone else. I have recently met someone myself that I think is pretty special, but it is really early yet so I don't want to get too carried away. His name is Darryl and I met him when I had to go to a conference for work. He is 39 and has been married before. He is quite good looking and has a good sense of fun. He is a little obsessed with his dogs as he goes to dog shows with Tara and Bess, his purebred cocker spaniels and this does seem to take up a fair amount of his time, but I went the other week to a show and it was pretty interesting. Anyway I'll let you know if it develops further.

I can't believe that we are about to celebrate another Christmas and New Year. I don't think we could match the last New Year's Eve so I don't think I will even try. It is really nice to keep in touch with all my friends, even though so many of you live all over the place. So until the next time, I wish you all a very merry Christmas and have a wonderful New Year.
Here's lookin' atya

Pauline XXXXX

Christmas 2001

Well it's that time of the year again to make contact with all my many friends across this mighty world of ours. Once again I'm trying to be super organised, as December is usually a marathon of parties. Of course there will be many of you who already know most of my news but for those that don't, I'm sure you're keen to catch up.

Usually I manage to do some travelling, but this year I have saved all my pennies so I can buy a new car. It is a red Mazda convertible and I just love it. I always said that everyone should own a sport scar at least once in his or her life. I guess one of these days the novelty of it will wear off and I'll have itchy feet once more. My New Zealand trip was put off for the second year in a row and Connie was that fed up she went without me.

The family have been keeping me busy this year with constant visits and the occasional babysitting sessions. John and Michelle are coping much better and are quite settled even though Jack is still a handful. After that last incident at school, it was decided that school was just not going to work and so he is now working at a pet shop. Maureen and Paul keep expanding their business with their compost toilets and mud bricks. They are now running courses in mud brick making and sustainable living. I just love seeing Drummond and Sarlin and try to visit as often as possible. Speaking of nephews and nieces, I have a new one. Barry. Nora and Leon were over the moon with Barry's arrival and he looks so cute, although I do find it a bit strange calling a baby Barry. Apart from Leon's job, they have had an incredible year with things turning out well for them.

Trev and Gary had their ceremony in September and it was beautiful and quite different to what I expected. I was worried how Dad would take it but he seems to have accepted Gary into the family. Dad is thinking of retiring next year but I just can't imagine it and Mum doesn't want to imagine it. I'd love them to take a big holiday somewhere. Maybe they could do some travelling with Grandma and Grandad who just can't seem to stop travelling. This year it was Peru. I really admire them.

A quick paragraph on the subject I lately choose to ignore...romance. I won't go into the details as many of you have already provided a shoulder for me this year. Darryl and I didn't work out as he had more baggage than I first realised. I knew he had been married before, but I didn't realise how many times. He was so obsessed with his dogs, and would take them everywhere with him and treated them like they were human. Tony didn't help matters either but that's another story.

Work is going great and I'm really looking forward to next year as I'll be doing a lot of rep work and travelling for a large part of each month. The business is certainly growing and I can't see it slowing down yet. Bem's considering leaving and working as a private consultant which doesn't please Dale at all. Those two have such a love hate relationship and to be honest it's really quite tedious.

Hopefully with all my travelling next year with work, I'll be able to catch up with many of you and I know I'm seeing some of you before New Year, but to those I don't see, have a very Merry Christmas and New Year.

Here's lookin atya

Pauline XXX

Christmas December 2002,

Can you believe that it's that time of the year again!?! I haven't been as organised as I usually am so this letter is running a little late. What a year!

Of course there are some of you who would already know some of my news, but for those who I haven't been able to catch up with, here is the latest in my life.

This year I haven't been able to do as much personal travel as usual, however I have been required to travel extensively for my work. This has meant I have been on the go constantly. I know I should have sent postcards, however it has also been pretty demanding on my time. I have had to spend quite a lot of time in Hobart, (for my international friends, that is off the mainland and is the capital city of Tasmania) and have been surprised that I have enjoyed my time there so much.

During my time in Hobart, I have managed to meet someone I consider pretty special. His name is Brett and he is a telecommunications officer. He is 45, so a bit older than me, however like most blokes, is young at heart. He owns his house, enjoys sailing and dining at five star restaurants. We have been seeing each other for the past six and a half months and I am really hoping that this may be THE one! I was amazed that he hasn't been married or for that matter even had a long term relationship up until now, however he has done a lot of travelling himself. I cannot believe that he really doesn't seem to have any particular hang ups, certainly not obsessed with his dogs, like Daryl was.

I am thinking of moving to Hobart if it works out, although that would mean that I would have to quit my job as even though we have quite a lot of business there, it would not be enough to justify my employment based there. I have hinted to my boss, Dale that it would be worth the move, however he dismisses the idea without consideration. I'm sure that I could get another job, however I have put so much into my career that I would hate to jeopardise this for perhaps a lesser position. So much to think about coming into the New Year. If things work out, I'm sure you will all know about it, with a well advanced invitation!

Now onto the family front. Granddad and Grandma have only travelled on short trips this year as Granddad wasn't in the best of health for a large part of the year. He maintains of course that Grandma was too frightened of what was happening in the world although I don't really believe that as she is so care-free. John and Michelle are considering a move back home which I think is largely due to the 'friends' Jack has been mixing with. He no longer works at the pet shop and prefers just doing odd jobs when he needs to. I have seen so much of Nora and Leon and of course little Barry this year and I almost convinced them to come with me to Hobart on one occasion but both Leon and Barry had a virus right at the wrong time. I badly want them to meet Brett so they don't all think he is a phantom. Brett isn't all that keen on visiting the mainland for some reason. Trevor and Gary are still so happy doing what they do and would dearly love to start a family (I didn't ask how?) but I don't think they would have enough time anyway with all their commitments and interests. Maureen, Paul and Drummond and Sarlin are all well even though they had a serious set-back with the business with the fire in June. At least no-one was seriously hurt and the mud bricks weren't damaged. Mum and Dad are well and are thinking of moving house. I cannot remember the number of houses they have had over the years.

Hopefully this finds everyone well and happy and maybe I'll be able to catch up with many of you and I know I'm seeing some of you before New Year, but to those I don't see, have a very Merry Christmas and New Year.

Cheers

Pauline XX

POST CARD SENT FROM ITALY APRIL 2003

MESSAGE: 'Can't believe I'm in Italy with Brett and guess what?! We're engaged!! I am so excited. Will let you know soon when the big day will be.'

Love Pauline (& Brett)

Christmas Letter 2003

I know I say this every year, but where has the time gone?? I can't believe that another year has passed and we are about to welcome ol' Saint Nick again.

What a year it has been. Many of you already know that I have had an amazing year, especially now that Brett and I are engaged. The trip to Italy was incredible and so very romantic. Some of you already know the problems we have encountered trying to get married by New Years and I really will not bore the rest of you with the details. I'm sure because you haven't received your invitation yet, you have worked out that New Years is no longer a possibility. With both of our heavy work commitments, it is now looking like it will be well and truly into next year. I thought that Valentine's Day would be lovely and it does fall on a Saturday, but Brett wasn't so keen. We have found a weekend at the end of September, but that would clash with the AFL grand final. I didn't think this was a big deal, but Brett thought that might be a problem for some of our interstate guests.

Speaking of interstate, some of you may not know yet that Brett and I finally took the plunge and are sharing a house that is when we are in the same state. I have moved most of my things into his Hobart house. I finally convinced Dale that we needed a rep in Tasmania. Luckily because we have picked up so much business here, he could hardly refuse. I was also lucky that no one else wanted to commute to Tassie. I have still kept my flat on the mainland though, as it works out that I spend about 50% of my time there. I am really so excited about getting married and I am sure that whenever we can finally pick a date, it will be a glorious wedding. After the big day we are thinking selling Brett's house and buying one together, one that is big enough to accommodate all our friends and family.

Now onto the family news. Sadly Grandma and Granddad have had to stop all travelling as Granddad's poor health has really taken its' toll. They have now moved into a retirement village. It is good for them I think because they still have a lot of activities and have made many new friends. They keep inviting me over for another slide night because I think they need to relive their amazing travelling. Since John and Michelle and Jack have moved back, I have been able to catch up with them a lot more. Poor John has had the worry over the court case, but it looks like they are going to be okay. Jack has suddenly settled down a bit and I think it has to do with his having a girlfriend. Nora and Leon and Barry are such a lovely family and the good news is that they are pregnant again and expecting in May. Leon is worried about the costs of another child, but that's Leon. Maureen and Paul have really done well especially after the set back of the fire last year. They won an environmental award this year for their organic pest control tablets. Sarlin and Drummond are the most adorable children. Trev and Gary have not been able to adopt a child yet. They are still trying and in the meantime have become foster parents to a guide dog. It really is the sweetest little puppy. Its name is Puddles and they have taken on the task of training it for its role as a guide dog. I know that Trev in particular will be heartbroken when they have to give it back. Mum and Dad are still pottering along. They moved house again and have decided that this will definitely be the last time.

Well I know this letter is a little shorter than my usual one, however I am trying to get it done in my lunch hour. It has been a fantastic year and it was so good catching up with so many of you particularly those I haven't seen for ages.

Hopefully this finds everyone well and happy. I'll be seeing some of you before New Year, but to those I don't see, have a very Merry Christmas and New Year.

Cheers

Pauline XXand Brett

August 2004: Wedding invitations sent!!!

Christmas 2004...No Letter, clearly overwhelmed by emotions.

Christmas 2005

Merry Christmas!

Well I say it every year, but where has the time gone? Before I get into all my news I must apologise to any of you who I haven't caught up with lately, however with losing Granddad last year and my break up with Brett, I really didn't feel like communicating. To those who were thoughtful enough to send me a card, thank you.

It really has been an emotional year, but keeping busy has meant I haven't stopped to dwell on things too much. They do say when a door closes, someone opens a window. Well I have finally come out of my gloomy cloud to discover life is still pretty good. I really think that everything is meant for a reason, so the fact that Brett is now married to Bem and are expecting their first child is something I just have to accept. Of course this has pretty much ended my relationship with Bem as well, but I have decided to grit my teeth and get on with life. Moving back to the mainland has been great because it has put some geographical distance from Brett who is still in Hobart. Fortunately Dale could see that keeping me in Tassie was not going to help the business so transferred me to our Queensland office. I have enjoyed living again on the Sunshine Coast and am now able to catch up with a few of you at our regular Friday night swill.

Although I have been kept busy at work, I have still found time to take up water aerobics and I just love it. It's such a great way to keep fit and I have met the most amazing people. My usual instructor is Cheryl but on her day off Alex takes the class. He is very good looking and we have had a few after class chats, so I am hoping that he might eventually ask me out. Anyway, enough of my love life. It has been great living back near Trev and Gary. They are still trying to have a baby and believe the laws may be changed soon. In the meantime their Collectable Classics shop has become a big hit. They are constantly travelling the country and sometimes overseas sourcing the best goods.

Even though my wedding didn't eventuate, there did turn out to be a family wedding with Jack and his very pregnant young girlfriend Mandy tying the knot. It was a pretty low key event and I really hope that they make it work especially for the baby's sake. The baby was born in September and is a girl named Maddison. I guess that makes me a great aunt?

More on the family front, Mum and Dad are well and Dad just loves playing in his jazz band. He caught up with some of his old school buddies and they put together a little band. They play regularly at the local RSL and sound really good. Nora, Leon, Barry and Tess are fine and have just moved into their palatial suburban home, such a change from the dump they used to live in. John and Michelle are also well and John is hoping to sell some of his chessboards to tourists. He has recreated the usual pieces with Australian icons. So the pawns are all kangaroos, the Queen is Dame Edna, the King is a two headed Burke and Wills, the Bishop is Ned Kelly, the Knight is Pharlapp, and the Castle is the Opera House. I think they are a little tacky and that he should stick to his accounting. But don't tell him I said that. Maureen and Paul are still amazing and still winning awards. Besides their environmental award for the pest control pellets that they have now won three years in a row, their compost toilets have also been nominated for outstanding contribution to the environment.

Well I really hope this finds you all well and happy and getting ready for a fantastic Christmas and New Year.

I know that I will be catching up with some of you during the silly season, however those that I will not be able to see soon, Merry Christmas. Look out all you Melbournites, as I may need some accommodation in March as I am heading down there to go to the games. Will see you then.

Cheers
Pauline XX