



Toddler Pauline



*Pauline(?) - at eight
(She lit the stove!!)*



Pauline at family party



*Pauline at Zumba
(Teasing the Hockey Players)*

Pauline has been an optimist since birth. Her **paternal grandmother** was a midwife and, when the country doctor was called for a birth, he would ring a bell at her lane, and she would run down to his horse and buggy and off they'd go. Sort of like in the BBC series "Call the Midwife". However Pauline was in such a hurry that it was her father who "caught" her before the doctor and her grandmother arrived.

At the time of Pauline's birth her father, (Nelson Foster), and her mom, (Mary Jane Staley), along with her older brother and sister, lived in her **maternal grandparents'** large farmhouse in Norfolk County on the north shore of Lake Erie. Perhaps because of her impatience to get into this world, Pauline's parents gave her a particularly long moniker: Mary Sylvia Pauline (nickname Polly) Foster. She would find it difficult to fit her lengthy name on government forms. Two younger sisters arrived after Pauline. All five children had chores to do as soon as they could toddle. Pauline would be boosted up on a huge horse to ride to the end of their road to fetch the mail. She ran everywhere including down hills FAST. One time she tripped and practically tore her knee cap off. The knee has never been the same since!!

The main crop on the farm was tobacco and Pauline quickly became a super-fast hand at tying tobacco leaves; at only eight years old she was lent out to tie tobacco at adjacent farms. (Click on the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hunbnvmCeTM>, to see women hand-tying tobacco quickly.) There were always many cousins to play with and her grandpa even taught her to shoot a rifle. No one ever told her she couldn't do something because she was not a boy. One time when Pauline was eight years old, she came home to find the wood stove had gone out. She used the wrong accelerant to restart the fire and the stove went **BOOM**; the stove lid flew to the ceiling and then settled back right in place!!

As well as doing construction jobs her father had a stump removal business. He built a trailer and took the family along to live where he was working. Some of his long-term jobs were near Oshawa, in Scotland, Ontario, and in Port Hope. They eventually purchased a farm near Strathroy and Pauline attended a one-room school house, with an "outhouse". The students warmed up their sandwiches on the wood-burning stove. On the farm they had horses, cows, pigs, chickens and goats and the entire family worked from dawn to dusk.

After high school Pauline commuted to London for a hairdressing/cosmetology course and graduated with Honours. At the age of 16, while still living at home, she opened her own beauty shop in Strathroy. One evening her father answered a phone call and when he hung up told Pauline a young man she had never officially met was coming to pick her up to go skating. They married and had a son Allan and, then two daughters, Beverly and Christine. Sadly, Pauline's brother was killed in a car accident at thirty years old. She

and her family eventually moved to London and then to Brockville in 1969. I was impressed to hear that not only was Allan enrolled in hockey but so were her daughters.

With the kids mostly grown Pauline opened a beauty salon in Brockville and then sold it to attend St. Lawrence College. Subsequently she was a Residence Supervisor at Brockville General Hospital for eighteen years. But fate intervened when she had a stroke at only forty-three. The doctors told her that she would never work again. But just like Pierre Trudeau, she said "Just watch me!!" She did people's hair in her home, catered events, and did home cleaning. She didn't retire until she was 70 and then moved to Ottawa.

Pauline has always loved to travel, especially on trips to Cuba. On one trip she and daughter Beverly had front seats at a concert. When the number ended, a gorgeous young man, jumped down from the stage and enveloped Beverly and Pauline in a bear hug. (Pauline at first couldn't figure out whether it was she or her daughter who was the "main attraction" but eventually surmised that it was probably her daughter!!) Beverly and César began dating, married and now live in Canada. However they still travel frequently back to Cuba to visit César's parents and daughter Rosearia.

When Pauline first moved in with Beverly and César she walked their Jack Russell four or five times a day. But Pauline had a health setback and ended up receiving a "new best friend", that in the form of an oxygen bottle that is now her constant companion. The "good docs" feel that her respiratory illness could be due to her years on a tobacco farm and also the spraying of DDT on the farm. A factor could also be her hairdressing career when she ground the hair dye "in situ" and was exposed to all sorts of noxious chemicals.

Pauline's doctors tell her she can do anything she wants to; her sidekick ("O.B.", i.e. Oxygen Bottle) does not cramp her style. She loves Zumba classes at GSAC and spends hours in the water at her family's cottages. She still cross-country skis, skates, and snow-shoes, and loves knitting, sewing, and scrap-booking. She has belonged to GSAC for about four years. She volunteered at the front desk for a while but found her oxygen tubing too meddlesome in that small space (and it also alarmed some members). Instead, she has been a regular volunteer on Wednesdays in the kitchen, helping Michelle, and loves it.

She has been an inspiration to many. I have taken Zumba too and before Pauline joined no one liked to use a "rest chair". However when Pauline and her pal "O.B." joined it became "de rigueur" for others to have a chair when needed. I asked Pauline if she has any "life advice". She advised never to go kayaking your first time with your wallet and credit cards in your pocket!! Also: "Never darken your name", "Never give up", and "Always be positive". On her "bucket list" is to someday have another rambunctious Jack Russell in her life. Pauline's one regret is that she can't revisit Cuba because they don't currently have readily available oxygen. As soon as the Americans get established there they probably will though. So, Hasta la vista en Cuba, Paulinita!!