

A Novel Life

Pamela Bauer Mueller

By Cynthia Robinson

Photography by Mike Force Photography

Author Pamela Bauer Mueller’s journey to the Golden Isles may have been a long one, but it’s been an adventure every step of the way—an adventure one could expect to find in the pages of a novel.

Pamela, who was born in Chicago but grew up in a seaside Oregon town, was always a creative, imaginative child, and her adulthood follows that same path. “Reading and writing were my favorite subjects in school.” While she still describes herself as somewhat of a private person, she also developed a love of travel and new adventures while studying Spanish at Lewis and Clark College in Portland. During college, she spent time studying and living with families in Mexico, where she would meet a young architect, Eduardo Gual, who would eventually become her husband.

After earning a degree in Spanish, Pamela spent two years traveling the world as a flight attendant for Pan Am, seeing every continent except Africa. In 1969, Pamela married Eduardo and said she spent 18 happy years living in Mexico City. They raised two bilingual daughters, while Pamela spent her time teaching Spanish to American businessmen and English to Mexican executives and children.

She also indulged her creative side by modeling and acting for commercials, Mexican television and American movies filmed in Mexico. Pamela’s noted roles included small parts in the movies *Caveman*, starring Ringo Starr and Barbara Bach, *Volunteers*, starring Tom Hanks, Rita Wilson and John Candy and *Under Fire*, starring Nick Nolte, Gene Hackman and Ed Harris. “It was so much fun.”

However, after 18 years, her marriage ended amicably, and she and her daughters returned to the United States, settling in San Diego. “I could only find Kelly Services type jobs at first.” Eventually, her life took another turn when she got a job with U.S. Customs, which required she attend training classes at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Glynn County. Not only did she fall in love with the area, she also fell for a fellow student, Michael “Mike” Mueller.

“We had a FLETC romance,” she said, laughing. For the next two-and-a-half years, she and Mike had a long-distance relationship. She returned to work in San Diego; he was stationed in Port Huron, Michigan. Although Mike proposed, Pamela wanted to wait until her youngest daughter graduated high school. It was while working as a U.S. customs inspector, Pamela decided to write her first book, “To thank my daughters for following me and dealing with life changes following my divorce. I used our Mexican cat, Kiska, as the protagonist. I wrote about our journey through her eyes,” said Pamela, who added she learned how to self-publish and established her own small imprint company, Piñata Publishing.

The book, *The Bumpdy Road*, was supposed to be a stand-alone effort until school children she visited and read to asked for a sequel. That book eventually turned into the Kiska Trilogy; a three-book series following her time not only in San Diego, but through her transfer to a second Customs’ job in Vancouver, Canada, and eventual marriage to Mike in 1975. The final book of the trio, *Eight Paws to Georgia*, concluded with the couple’s move to St. Simons Island in 2000, when Mike secured a FLETC teaching job and encouraged Pamela to leave her customs’ job to pursue writing full-time.



“In Coastal Georgia I was inspired by the local history and switched from writing children’s literature to historical fiction.” That initial inspiration—a local trolley tour where she learned the story of Neptune Small, a slave who played an important role in St. Simons’ history—led to the publication of her first historical novel, *Neptune’s Honor*, in 2005. She has now written and published 12 books, including the best seller, *Splendid Isolation: The Jekyll Island Millionaires’ Club 1888-1942*.

“People are always giving me ideas.” One of her favorites, she said, *Lady Unveiled: Catharine Greene Miller 1755-1814*, came about after she and Mike visited Greyfield Inn on Cumberland Island on their anniversary. “I try to go to their (subjects’) homes when I can, visit historical societies, cemeteries and talk to their ancestors when possible. I was able to visit Nathaniel Greene’s home, and it gave me goosebumps,” said Pamela, who spends six to eight months researching, followed by the same length of time writing before publishing and promoting a book, and then starts the process all over again.

Her latest novel, *The Dancing Delilahs*, is the story of female Civil War spies. “Mike helped me research. We found the stories of 19 of them, and I narrowed it down to two—Pauline Cushman and Antonia Ford for the book.”

As much as she loves researching and writing, Pamela says since the writing process is such a solitary activity, she looks forward to her other job—working as a FLETC role player. “At first they told me they weren’t hiring, but when they found out I’m fluent in Spanish, they said, ‘You’re in!’ I have portrayed everyone from illegal aliens to judges. I love role-playing; it is my social life. Every month, we role players get an availability calendar to mark the times we



can give. It can be five days, 20 days or only two days. We (role players) have become great friends and I don’t think I’ll ever quit.”

Although she loved living on St. Simons Island, “One day I got a bee in my bonnet and told my husband, ‘it’s getting too crowded and noisy here—we’re moving to Jekyll!’” In 2007, after a few hiccups in finding a house, the couple bought an older home they renovated. “The dining room actually had room for a dining set I had in Mexico. We love the house. Mike said the best thing we ever did was to get married and second best was moving to Jekyll. I think it has the area’s best beaches. We love biking and walking the beach.”

Even though she and Mike still love to travel, including a recent trip to Italy and one they have planned to the Galapagos Islands, they’re spending their remaining years living in the Golden Isles. “I love the South; it reminds me of Mexico. People here are gracious and soft spoken and family is so important to Southerners—we fit right in.”

Up Close:

Writing Honors: Named Georgia Author of the Year three times; also, won three Mom’s Choice Awards and a silver medal from the Independent Publisher Book Awards.

Starr Matchmaker: Ringo, whom they all called by his real name, Richard, on the set of *Caveman*, asked her to dinner one night. “I was married, and I knew it wasn’t anything romantic. He wanted me to find out if Barbara Bach was serious about the man she was dating at the time.” The former Beatle and Bach later married and invited Pamela to their 1981 wedding. “My husband didn’t want to go and being young and insecure I thought, ‘I can’t go to a Beatles’ wedding by myself!’ I really regret that!”

As Her World Turned: Pamela has acted in numerous telenovelas (Mexican soap operas). “We wore earpieces and they fed us our lines, so you didn’t have to memorize them. It’s what made me comfortable with public speaking.”

Children/Grands: Daughters Sandra, a mother of two, and Ticiania, a mother of four. “I am so proud of my daughters and grandchildren and we love traveling to spend time with them.”

Public Pamela: Pamela is a sought after public speaker – recently at the Georgia Southern University Farm to Table Dinner. She has a booth at the Jekyll Island Shrimp & Grits Festival each September and will be at the Sunshine Festival on St. Simons, July 1-4.