



2008 My Next Chapter First Prize Winner Paul Scott

"A New Chapter"

1997: The banner read "Fifty is Nifty." Mary saw it upon entering. I kissed her, handed over a glass of wine and presented a cupcake topped with a candle that reignited when blown out.

2000: Where had she kept it, that reigniting candle? Standing in for all fifty, there it was, atop a homemade cherry pie. We kissed.

2002: We expanded our photo-voltaic system and repaired the wind generator. Now we seldom need the back-up gasoline generator.

2003: Mary gained an Associate Degree in accounting and plans to offer a bookkeeping service after "retirement".

2004: I grow fruits and vegetables for market. We place our forested land under a state sponsored managed forest plan.

2005: I begin a multi-year winter-time endeavor studying math tutored by a retired mathematician and teacher, my brother. His enthusiasm is contagious.

2006: American Tree Farmers' Association certifies our forest as a sustainably managed resource. We begin a two year tree planting program that uses deer excluders. They are expensive but necessary. Without a matching grant from the state, we could not do this.

2007: In partnership with West Wisconsin Land Trust, Mary and I permanently protect our 126 acres from subdivision and activities that degrade it. We dearly want to protect our private, undeveloped lake in its wild state. Mary becomes my favorite politician; she's a town supervisor. Her motivation is accountability in spending public money and local land use policies. It is a new, second career pursued simultaneously with her twenty five year paralegal career.

2008: A sign arrives that we may post if we choose. The first two words are "Conserved Forever". A biologist asks to visit. He suspects the presence of threatened species.

After July, 2008: The chapter continues. After "retiring", Mary plans to continue her service in local government and start a bookkeeping service. I will continue growing fruits and vegetables. Together, we'll endeavor to ensure a rural future for our community. Together, we'll manage and care for our forested, water, wildlife and soil resources. That is our endowment to the future. We shall also kiss, frequently.