

Chapter VIII

House Plans

October 5, 1946 – December 7, 1946

Sheffield came into the house after feeding the horses. The cold fall air and his age made his left leg tingle more than it used to. "Where did the last twenty years go?" he wondered. Not only did he feel older, he looked it too. But Ramona, he thought, didn't look like a woman in her sixties. To him, she didn't look like she was even fifty yet.

As he came into the house, she was in the kitchen putting the last touches on Thanksgiving dinner. Norma, Janet, and Craig's wife were busy putting things on the table, while their husbands were rounding up the grandkids. Once everyone was seated, there were twenty people in all seated around two tables in the spacious dining room.

When he wanted to have a place large enough for everyone to gather for occasions such as this, this wasn't quite what he had in mind. Sure, twenty years ago when the house was new, all of the Brasons gathered there. But now, his parents were gone and Walt and Shenan had a lot of grandchildren of their own as well and got together with their respective families.

After dinner, there was so much help clearing away, that they were in each others way. To make the kitchen less crowded, Sheffield took all of the grandchildren into the family room. "Read us a story, Grandpa." they begged in unison.

"What would you like to hear this time?" He asked. The older ones were ten or eleven and the youngest were just toddlers so he had a broad audience to appeal to. One of the children handed him the well worn storybook that he and Geannie used to read to Sandy and Austin. He opened it and began leafing through the well worn pages. "Here's one." he said and began reading, "Once upon a time...."

At that point, he woke up. The dream had been so vivid that he could remember the details of his surroundings and the faces of the cast of characters. It was earlier than he normally woke up, but he couldn't go back to sleep. He pondered the meaning of the dream. It was as if he had been visited by a Dicken's like ghost with events yet to come? Had he actually had a glimpse of what the future held in store? If so, it was an inviting prospect compared the course their lives were on with just the two of them. It was a future that he wanted and he knew that Ramona wanted it too. Sam was offering them that future. In God's wisdom, he felt that was the way it was meant to be.

While these thoughts occupied his mind, he felt Ramona stirring next to him. She rolled over and opened her eyes and smiled at him. He took her in his arms and pulled her close to him. Without even saying good morning, he asked, "So, what should we do?"

"It took me a long time go to sleep" she said. "I thought about it a lot during the night and I kept

thinking about them being split up. Craig's pleading that they just wanted to stay together really weighed heavily on my mind. No child should have to ask for such a thing. We could make it happen for them. Its what the kids want, its what Sam wants, and its what I want."

"And," Sheffield added, "I'm confident that its what God wants too. I really believe that is why I was to take the job here instead of the one in Hawaii. I gave it a lot of thought last night as well. I decided that this was a decision that we couldn't make on our own, so I got out of bed and got down on my knees and and asked God."

"I thought you had got up once. So what did He tell you?"

"Its not what he told me, its what he showed me. I dreamed that it was twenty or so years from now and we were gathered with our children and grandchildren in a big house with plenty of room for Thanksgiving. It was so real and vivid that I'd recognize the place if I saw it."

"Well then, "Ramona said, "I think we have our answer don't we. Lets forget about moving today and change directions. Lets put the house up for sale and build your dream house."

"I agree. Lets get up and get going."

While getting ready for the day and having breakfast, they talked about how they should proceed. Of course Sam would have to lay out how the adoption would be.

Ramona left their apartment and drove over to the Taylors to look in on Sam and take care of her needs and whatever else she could do for them. Being Saturday, Sheffield didn't have school, so he went to talk to the Austin Brothers.

"Well hello there, Sheffield," Stirling greeted him as he entered the store. "So is there anything we can do to help you with the move today?"

"We're not moving in after all."

"You're not? Is there something wrong with the house? I thought Ray did a great job."

"Oh he did a great job. Its just that we've decided to put it up for sale and have him build us bigger house out on our property in Salem."

"Oh I see." Stirling said, wondering why the sudden change in plans.

"I was wondering if you had some ready to build house plans. We want to get started on it as soon as possible."

"How soon?"

"This afternoon."

"So you are serious, aren't you. Why the rush?"

"We'd like to be able to move in as soon as possible."

The answer was vague but Stirling didn't press for a reason. "Come with me." he said. "We've got a

whole drawer full of plans that are all ready to go." He opened the drawer that was full of plans, complete with blueprints and handed Sheffield a stack of drawings.

As he looked through exterior sketches and floor plans he asked, "How soon could we get started?"

"That depends on who want to build it and what they have going on."

"What about Ray?"

"You'd have to ask him, but as far as I know, he doesn't have anything else lined up."

"Let's just say he's available."

"It would take about a week to get the building permit. You could break ground anytime after that. Once the foundation was poured it would have to cure for a week. That puts you at the middle of October. If the weather holds, that would give four to six weeks to get it framed and closed in. Once that's done, the inside could be finished during the winter. Its possible that you could be in it by February, if everything fell into place that is."

"That's perfect." Sheffield responded.

"Why. What's the rush?" Stirling asked asked again.

"I really can't say right now. But its important. Can I take these with me to show Ramona?"

"Sure. Take anything you want. Let us know what you decide and we can help you get some contractors lined up and get started for you."

"Thanks Stirling." Sheffield said as he gathered up the plans. I'll get back to you."

On the way home, Sheffield went out to the property to see where it might go. When he returned to their apartment and began looking through the the plans more closely. He studied each one until he came to one plan in particular. He took one look at it and it seemed so familiar. He looked at the floor plan showing a large dining room. After looking at it for a minute, he recognized it as the house in his dream the night before.

When Ramona arrived at the Taylors, Samantha was still asleep, but she found the kids up and milling around. It had been a hard week for them, and now that the funeral was over the reality of their loss and their plight had set in. Seeing Ramona come through the front door cheered them up a little as she greeted them with a smile and, "Good morning. How is everyone?"

"Hungry." Craig said.

Norma and Janet returned the greeting as they both hugged her at the same time. "Are you hungry too?"

"Uh huh." they both answered.

"Why don't you all go get dressed and I'll see what I can find."

The girls ran off to their bedroom, but Craig hung back. "So, Missus. Brason, have you had a chance to think about it."

"Yes we have Craig. We have talked about it a lot since last night."

"What did you decide."

"I think I need to talk to your mother first. She should be the one to tell you. Now, go get dressed."

"Alright." he said a little glumly, hoping to have had an answer.

Ramona looked through the cupboards that she now knew as well as her own. She had been the one who had done the grocery shopping and had put it away. She got out a box of Aunt Jemima pancake mix and whipped up some batter. By then the girls had returned and she had them set the table.

A few minutes later, Craig returned as the first batch were coming off girdle. She sat them all down and said, "Craig, you're the man of the house now. Why don't you say Grace."

After the blessing, Ramona put another batch on the girdle and made up a plate to take into Sam. As she entered her bedroom she found her awake and greeted her, "Good morning Sam. How are you feeling this morning? I hope you're hungry."

Her face lit up, "Hi Ramona. I'm alright I guess but I'm really not very hungry. Thanks anyway. You're so good to me."

"You really should eat something. You need your strength."

"What for? I'm dieing anyway."

"Hey now. Thats no way to talk. Until then you have some living to do." Ramona sweetly chastised her. "Right now your kids need you. Their grieving the loss of both Mike and you at the same time and they're worried about you and what is going to happen to them."

Sam looked deep into Ramona eyes and asked, "And what is going to happen to them? Their father is gone and I won't be far behind him."

Ramona sat down on the edge of her bed and said, "Their going to stay together and be raised in a loving family who wants them and will take care of them as their own."

"And who might this family be?" Sam asked.

"Ours. Sheffield and I will honor your request and take care of them for you. We have given it a lot of thought and have talked it over and we feel that it is the right thing to do, both for the kids and for us. I'll go so far to say that its what God wants too."

Sam breathed a sigh of relief and laid back in her bed. "Thank God." She exclaimed. "Its what we want too. You're an answer to my prayers. Now let me have those hotcakes. I need my strength you know. I've got a lot of work to do."

"Do you need my help?"

"No I think I can manage."

"Alright then, I'll go check on the kids. I'll be back in a few minutes."

The kids had finished eating and were about to leave their dirty dishes on the table. "Oh no you don't. I need you to clear away and wash your dishes."

Hoping to score some points with Ramona, Craig encouraged his sisters, "Come on girls, lets clean up."

There was one pancake left so Ramona got a plate and sat down and put a little butter and syrup on it and poured herself a little glass of orange juice and asked the kids what they were going to do with their day. When Ramona was finished eating, Norma took her plate and washed it with the others and put it in the drainer while Janet went to get her mother's dishes.

With breakfast taken care of, Ramona helped Sam get undressed and bathed. While Ramona sat with her, Samantha relaxed in the bathtub and talked about what she had in mind for how the transition would take place. It was obvious that she had given it a lot of thought. Ramona stayed with her and helped get dressed and put on her makeup and helped her with her hair. Sam even went out into the living room where she could sit and listen to the radio.

With things at the Taylor's taken care of, Ramona went home where she found Sheffield looking over a set of blueprints. "What's this?" she asked.

"This is the house in my dream last night." Sheffield said with excitement. "How did it go at the Taylors? Did you tell Samantha what we decided?"

"Yes I did. She was relieved. So, show me 'our' dream house."

"Here's what the outside looks like."

"Oh that will look nice on the ranch. I like the three gables on the upstairs. I assume those are bedrooms."

"Here's the floor plan, this is the main floor and here's the upstairs."

Together they studied the plans and commented about the layout and features.

"When I talked to Stirling, he said that the soonest we could get started would be in about a week, after we get a building permit. If we go with these plans as they are, we won't need to have a draftsman redo them and that will save a lot of time. I called Ray Austin and he is pretty much wrapped up for the season, and he and his crew could build it for us. He will put together an estimate on the cost for us. He said that he could get the materials at cost, like he did on the remodel job. He was glad to have something to carry them into the winter. If the weather cooperates, they can have the outside finished by the end of November and ready to move into sometime around the first of February.

“Next I called Danny about the excavation work. He can come and dig the foundation about anytime. So what do you think?”

“I'm excited. I can just picture it now.”

“After lunch, lets go out to ranch and I'll show you where I staked it out.”

Taking the plans with them, they dove over to the property. Laying them out on the hood of the car, Sheffield showed her what he envisioned. The house would be about one hundred feet from the road, parallel to the highway which ran at a thirty degree angle to east and west. The front would face the mountains to the north, with Fort Lewis Mountain standing at 3,260 feet eight miles to west by northwest and Brushy Mountain standing at 2,848 feet eight and a half miles to the north by northeast. The back of the house would face the hills three miles to the south that ran from the northwest to the southeast.

As they surveyed the site, an image of how the house would look came to life in their collective imagination. It was almost as if they could see it before their eyes. Satisfied with how it would look, they took advantage of being there and saddled up the horses and went for a ride into the hills splashed with color to the south.

Later in the afternoon, Sheffield went with Ramona when she went to look in on Sam. The three of them sequestered themselves in Sam's bedroom where they could talk in private. They told her about their plans for building a house on their property in order to have a place to raise the kids. Sam reviewed with Sheffield what she had in mind. On Monday she planned to call Mike's lawyer to set in motion the process that would allow the Brasons to adopt the kids once she was gone.

For some, it might seem strange to discuss such a proposition, but for Sam it was critical that the transition be as seamless as possible for the kids without disrupting their lives anymore than necessary. It would be difficult enough for them as it was. She hoped to have them integrated into their new family as much as possible before she was gone.

On Sunday, Ramona and Sheffield picked them up and took them to church. Afterwards they had Sunday dinner with Samantha and the kids. Craig outright asked if they were going to go live with the Brasons. Sam could keep it from them any longer and told them what had been decided.

The kids were relieved that they would have a home and a family, but the idea of losing their mother was almost overwhelming. After all, they were still in shock over losing their father. It only had been six days since he had died. They had missed that entire week of school, but it was time for them to go back.

The next morning, Ramona came over to get them ready for school and took them to made sure that they were alright. With trepidation they got out of the car and went into their respective schools. Craig was a sophomore at Jefferson High School. Norma was in the eighth grade at Monroe Junior High School, and

Janet was in the fifth grade at Melrose Elementary, so each of them attended different schools. After dropping off the kids, she went by the Roanoke Times to place a classified ad listing their house for sale. When she got back to Sam's house, Samantha had arranged for their attorney to meet with her at her home on Wednesday.

While Ramona was getting the kids off to school, Sheffield went to the court house in Salem with the blueprints for their dream house to file for a building permit. He was told that it should be approved by Wednesday afternoon. Based on that assumption, he lined up Danny to come and dig the foundation on Thursday and Ray to have the foundation poured on Friday.

By the end of the day on Monday, things had been put into motion. For Sam it gave her something to live for. This had now become her mission in life. Putting this deal together would be the most significant and lasting act of love that she could do for them before cancer took her from them.

On Tuesday, the ad appeared in the paper. The next day, the building permit was approved. Sam met with her attorney to begin laying out her plan. On Thursday morning, Shenan and Joe surveyed the building sight and that afternoon, Danny bought in his Army surplus Osgood Model 200 Shovel and dug the trench for the foundation and a small basement for the furnace and water heater. The cable driven excavator was powered by a Chrysler IND-7 straight 6 engine had been manufactured in 1944 and had been used by the Army Corp of Engineers.

That evening Ramona got a call on the house and made an appointment to show it. Then on Friday morning, Ray set the forms and in the early afternoon, the concrete was poured. At the same time, Ramona showed the house.

It had been a busy week. With all that was going on, Sheffield taught his classes and worked with his team to get them ready for their first match in two weeks. Sheffield almost immediately became the favorite teacher for those who were in his government class because of the way he made it interesting and applicable. Considered to be a hometown war hero, all of the students reverently referred to him as "The Admiral". He and Ramona were asked by the homecoming committee to chaperon the homecoming dance on Saturday, October 12th.

The night before the dance they attended the homecoming game at Victory Stadium against EC Glass High School from Lynchburg. The Magicians beat the Hilltoppers thirteen to twelve in a close game that came down to a field goal after the game tying touchdown.

The night of the dance, they dressed up complete with corsages and boutonnieres. The theme song was Dorothy Squires hit, "Coming Home". Sheffield thought it was very applicable to him. Thirty nine years after he graduated from high school and left home, he had come home after having been all over the world. Sheffield and Ramona enjoyed the evening and danced a few numbers, but mostly kept an eye on things.

The only trouble occurred when a girl in jealous rage caused a stir when she began shouting insults and ripped the gown of her ex-boyfriend's date.

Craig was at the dance with Edith Austin. The two were obviously enamored by one another. As Sheffield watched them from across gymnasium, they reminded him of himself and Geannie. They had spent a lot of time together, but this was their first real date.

During the next week, while the concrete cured, the electric company came out and ran power to the house. The well that was on the property wasn't sufficient for a home, so a well driller was brought in. Danny came back with his shovel and dug a trench from the well to the house for the waterline. While he was there, he also dug a hole for the septic tank and the trenches for the drain field. At the end of the week, Ray and his crew were ready to start framing.

During that week, Ramona showed the house in town twice more. The families looking at it were young veterans with expanding families. It would take them a few days to be in a position to make an offer. She also kept busy taking care of Samantha and the kids. She was actually doing better than she had been immediately after Mike was killed. Her determination to see to it that her children would be taken care of gave her the strength to accomplish what she needed to do. Ramona had to make sure that she didn't wear herself out.

Samantha met with her attorney again to work on the adoption. The process was much like what Ruth Ann had gone through when she decided to give up her baby for adoption. She wanted the Brasons named as the sole option and wanted it to stipulate that the adoption take affect immediately upon her death. She also arranged to sell Mike's business to one of his competitors and put the money aside along with the money from Mike's life insurance in a trust for their college education.

Once Ray got started, the skeleton of the house began to take shape during the third week in October. The first floor was down and the walls were standing and they began laying the floor joists for the second story. In the meantime a rock mason had built a fireplace and was working on the chimney. Everything was right on schedule.

Ramona received an offer on the house and was in the process of closing the deal. She was surprised that the offer was for more than she had paid for it and the remodeling combined by about a thousand dollars. She began to think about what her niche might be. She had made money on the town house in Washington and now this house. She began thinking that buying and selling property would be a good way to invest her inheritance. She talked it over with Sheffield. He suggested that she talk to Charlie Austin and get his prospective as a former banker.

Ramona continued to take care of Sam and the kids. Sam wasn't doing as well that week as she had the week before. She and Sheffield took the kids one evening to let Sam rest. They took them out to see

how the house was coming along and to let them ride the horses.

On Friday the 18th, the Magician wrestling team had their first match of the season. The team bus left the high school at three o'clock when school let out. With both the junior varsity and the varsity teams and their coaches, the bus was full. A second bus was filled with with supporters who wanted to watch the match. Ramona, Norma, and Janet were on that bus so they could watch Craig in his first match.

The buses pulled into the parking lot of Lane High School in Charlottesville two and half hours later. Sheffield took his team to have a light meal before their match. The JV match was at seven. Craig won his match as Ramona, Sheffield, and his sisters cheered him on. The varsity match was at eight. For their first match, the team put forth their best effort but it wasn't enough to win the match.

It was nearly midnight when they got back in Roanoke. Sheffield and Ramona took the kids home and had them get ready for bed. They tried to do it without waking Sam, but she heard them stirring and managed to get out of bed to say goodnight. She was thrilled that Craig had won his match. Perhaps she might feel well enough to come see one of his matches when it was at home.

The house was progressing quickly and the weather was cooperating. The fall colors were at their peak during the third week of October. The oak trees in the pasture along the river added to the scarlet and amber that had painted the valley and the hillsides. The second story had been framed and the rock chimney was complete. With any luck, they'd get the roof on and the sides closed in before the weather changed.

That next Saturday, the Jefferson High School wrestling team hosted a team from Richmond. Sam wanted so bad to see Craig's match and felt reasonably well enough to make an attempt. Ramona helped her get ready and took her to the school. It was the first time that she had ventured out of the house in more than two weeks.

Ramona talked to Sheffield to see what he might do to arrange for Craig to go first. All it took was an explanation to JV coach and the referees and it was arranged. Craig didn't know if she would be able to make it or not. When he saw her and Ramona come in just before match was to start, he waved from across the gymnasium to acknowledge that he had seen her. Sam mentioned to Ramona, "It's too bad that his father missed all of this."

The match began and Craig and his opponent were called to the mat. They took their positions and when the whistle blew, Craig had the advantage right from the start. After the first two minute period, he had managed to outscore his opponent. But during the second match, his opponent came back strong and nearly had Craig pinned, but he managed to get out of it. At the end of the second period, the other kid was ahead in points.

Just before the whistle blew to start the third period, Craig caught his mother's eye. She was bursting

with pride. Craig was glad that she was there and didn't know if she'd ever see him wrestle again. He was determined to justify her pride. The referee blew the whistle and the round began. With the adrenaline pumping, Craig took the kid down and after about forty five seconds of rolling back and forth, he pinned his opponent to win the match.

When he got up off the mat, he looked at his mother to see her on her feet cheering. As he left the mat he waved to her. She blew him a kiss and then had Ramona take her home, satisfied that she got to see him wrestle just once more. When he was in junior high, she and Mike had attended all of his home matches and went to as many of the ones that were nearby as possible. The exertion had worn her out and she had Ramona help her into bed, but it was worth it.

After the JV match, Sheffield's varsity team took to the mats. Before a hometown crowd, they won the match.

As Halloween approached, the trusses were put in place and the house was really taking shape. The deal on the house in town closed and Ramona had made a nice profit on her investment. She did as Sheffield suggested and talked to Charlie about investing her money in real estate. He encouraged her that it would be a good place to put some of her money. He recommended that she diversify it somewhat and invest some of it in stocks and bonds too. Having it sit in the bank wasn't doing her much good. As far as real estate goes, he suggested that she might consider a combination of buying and selling, or flipping as he called it, rentals, and purchasing bare land and holding on to it. He told her the story of how that was how the once vast Austin estate had been built.

She thought about it some more and felt that his advise was sound. But right then she was preoccupied with taking care of Samantha and building a house. She decided to wait until things settled down so she could take the time to seriously develop a strategy and investigate her options. For the time being, she left her money in the bank.

One evening that week, Sheffield and Ramona brought some pumpkins to the kids and made an evening out of carving them. Sam was able to participate in the fun. On Halloween, Ramona took Janet trick or treating around their neighborhood while Sheffield drove Craig and Norma to a Halloween party at the church where Craig was going to meet up with Edith Austin.

Craig asked Sheffield to help him get his driver's licenses. His father had been teaching him to drive before he was killed and he pretty much had mastered the skill, but needed more experience. Sheffield promised that he would.

When he went back to get Ramona, he told Sam about Craig's request. She told him, "By all means. He needs to get his license." Unfortunately their only car had been demolished in the accident. Since Sam was no longer able to drive, she hadn't given any thought to replacing it, nor Craig getting his license. After

thinking about it for minute, she suggested that he take Craig with him and find a used car for her and she would pay for it. Once she was gone and they went to live with them, the car would be for the kids. After all, Norma would need to learn to drive in a couple of years.

During the first half of November, it got colder as Ray worked to enclose the house. He brought in another crew to shingle the roof while his crew installed the doors, windows and siding.

A man from the state adoption agency met with Sheffield and Ramona and interviewed them to determine if they should be approved for the pending adoption. At first he was concerned that their apartment was too small, but they explained that they were in the process of building a house. After describing it, he was satisfied. He talked to them individually and together, asking probing questions and asked for background information. When he was finished, all he would say is that he would compile his findings and forward it on to the judge who would have the final say in the matter. At least progress was being made.

Sheffield took his team to Christianburg for a match against the Blue Demons, which they won. A week later they hosted the Eagles from Danville. Another victory made them three and one for the season so far. However, they lost the next match against a the Hilltoppers from Lynchburg.

Sheffield kept his eye out for a used car for the Taylors. He scoured the classified ads and called around to some of the dealers. The next weekend he picked up Craig and took him around to look at what he had found. First they looked at a 1940 Studebaker Champion two door coupe. Next they looked at a rare 1942 Ford Super Deluxe Coupe, a 1940 Plymouth Coupe, and finally a red 1939 Buick Century convertible. They drove all four of them, and yes he let Craig get a feel for them as well. In Sheffield's opinion, he thought that Craig was ready to get his license. They looked under the hood of each one they test drove and he was impressed with Craig's knowledge of cars. He and his dad used to talk about cars a lot.

Craig really liked the convertible. Sheffield had always liked convertibles himself and would have got one when he bought his car, except that practicality won out. It was a good thing too, because as it turned out, he needed a family car big enough to hold five people. Of the four cars, the Buick was the least amount of money but was in excellent condition. I was a little haunting because it was so similar to Geannie's maroon 1938 Buick Roadmaster.

When they got back, they reported to Sam what they had found. Craig really wanted the convertible, and to his surprise, she agreed. She just wanted to make him happy. Seeing his excitement, made her happy. She couldn't complain about the price and wrote out the check. They took Ramona with them and went back and bought the car. Sheffield let Craig drive it home. It was a rather cloudy, cool day so they left the top up.

During the time up until Thanksgiving, the house was enclosed and finished on the outside. Now

they were installing the insulation, plumbing, electrical wiring, and the heat ducts. Sheffield continued to work with Craig, letting him do all of the driving whenever they went somewhere.

Sheffield's team had two more matches during that time as well. They lost a match to the Staunton Military Academy at home, but won the match against the Virginia High School Bearcats in Bristol. That gave them four wins and two losses so far in the season.

That year, Thanksgiving was on the 28th. To better integrate to Taylor kids into the Brason family, Craig, Norma, Janet, and Sam joined the Brasons for thanksgiving. They were younger than their soon to be cousins and older than the great grandchildren. But that didn't seem to matter. Ellen and Emmett were thrilled at the prospect of having more grandchildren. So far, the arrangement had been kept within the two families. To anyone on the outside, Sheffield and Ramona were just helping out.

Craig, Janet and Norma never knew their father's parents as they both died before they were born, as had Samantha's father. Her mother was in her mid eighties and lived in a nursing home in Richmond since the kids were little. They only saw her on occasion and when they did, she didn't know who they were so the prospect of having grandparents was a treat for them.

Samantha was the youngest in her family, her mother was forty seven when she had Sam. The rest of her siblings were all much older than her. Her next older sibling was thirteen years older and the oldest was 24 years older than Sam. Their families were all raised and were reluctant to take on additional children at their ages.

Emmett and Ellen's house was even more crowded than ever, and it was going to get even more so. Sheffield told everyone that they would host Thanksgiving next year in their new home and there would be room for everyone.

Both Shenan's and Walt's family were still growing. Danny and Melissa were expecting their third in February while Joe and Adelle were expecting their second in April. Ruth Ann and Joseph, who were not there, were also expecting. She was due in the middle of March but no one talked about the fact that the math didn't add up to nine months since their wedding. Rather, it coincided with when Joseph came home from the Army Air Force. Wendalynn had broken up with her boyfriend and had no prospects at the moment.

As for Walt's family, Emmaline and Willie were expecting in March as well. Tim brought a girl home with him from school but it was too early in their relationship to tell whether anything might come of it, but Sylvia and Scott Rowan seemed to be very serious and everyone expected an announcement of a wedding before the end of the year. Like Delbert, Curtis hadn't found a girlfriend yet, although they were both dating.

So in addition to the addition of Craig, Norma and Janet joining the family, four more great grandchildren were on the way in the next few months. That would make a total of for a total of eight great

grandchildren for Emmett and Ellen, not counting Lily who was given up for adoption.

It also appeared that at least one wedding was in the near future as well. Sylvia had been dating Scott Rowan sine the spring, soon after he returned from the Marines. They knew each other in high school and were in the same class, but that was the extent of their relationship. He enlisted in the Marines upon graduation and was a veteran of Iwo Jima.

During the first week in December, the Indian summer continued with daytime high temperatures reaching seventy degrees and lows in the mid fifties. On Friday of that week, the Magicians handed Sheffield another win, this time against Campbell County High School in Rustburg.

Saturday was his forty eighth birthday and Ramona and the kids took him to a movie. He had always liked westerns and one just happened to be playing at the Grandin Theater. It was "My Darling Clementine", based on the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral between the Earp brothers and the Clanton gang, starring Henry Fonda, Linda Darnell, Victor Mature, Walter Brennan, and others. Afterwards, they all went to the Pizza Joint. As Sheffield reflected on his birthday that year, it had a different feel about it for the first time in a long time. In the five years since Geannie and the kids had been killed, he had come a long ways. He and Ramona would soon be celebrating their third anniversary and they were about to have a ready made family, even though it was hard watching Samantha die.

Craig was the same age that Austin was when he died. They were very much different boys with different interests. And the girls, Norma and Janet were the apple of Ramona's eye as Sandy had been to Geannie. They brought out a side of Ramona that had never had a chance to shine.

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The Aunt Jemima trademark dates to 1893, although Aunt Jemima pancake mix debuted in 1889. The Quaker Oats Company bought the brand in 1926 and first registered the Aunt Jemima trademark in April 1937.

Hydraulic excavation equipment was in the development process at the time. Excavation equipment, like the Osgood Model 200 Shovel, was cable driven. The Osgood Company based in Marion, Ohio manufactured heavy construction equipment was founded in 1910 and was sold in 1954. Through successive sales and mergers it became part of Caterpillar.

