

## Chapter XXVII

### In the Blink of an Eye

August 27, 1949 – June 25, 1950

Sheffield and the girls had a week and a half to recuperate from their trip before going back to school, so he used his time writing his second book. On Saturday he had his book signing at the BookEnd, which had been publicized in the newspaper and on the radio. Sheffield was a recognized hometown hero and the turn out was expected to be fairly heavy. In order to meet the expected demand, the store ordered more copies from the publisher. They also had a large cardboard poster made of a blow up of the cover of the book.

At the request of the owner of the BookEnd, Sheffield wore his uniform to the event. He was reluctant to do so because he didn't want it to look like he was trying to profit at the Navy's expense.

"Don't be silly, Babe." Ramona had told him. "No one is going to think that. They are coming to buy a book about a navy ship written by a naval officer and war hero. I think the folks would be disappointed to find the local wrestling coach sitting at that table."

With her encouragement, he did wear his dress whites, complete with all of his ribbons and medals, including his double purple heart. It was the first time that he had worn it since retiring a little over three years earlier, and it still fit.

He arrived at the BookEnd just before one o'clock, when the event was to begin. He found the table with three cases of books sitting on the floor behind the poster, which was displayed next to the table. He had no sooner sat down when people began milling around him. Some of the people he had known for years. He was surprised that others had come from as far away as Lynchburg and even Charlottesville.

The event was scheduled for only two hours, but well into the third hour, people were still wanting to talk to him and have them sign a copy of the book for them. Finally around four twenty, the last person in line left. Of the three cases of books, there were only a handful of copies left. They would certainly sell later.

Sheffield decided to schedule book signings in Richmond and Norfolk as well. After all, his notoriety as a local war hero went beyond Roanoke. The proprietor of the store suggested bookstores in those cities that he should contact and gave him the poster to take with him.

When he got home, he changed out of his uniform and placed a couple of phone calls that resulted in a signing in Richmond the following Friday evening and one in Norfolk on Saturday afternoon. He could fly to Richmond and spend the night there, fly to Norfolk and do the one there, and fly home late that afternoon. He decided that would be all, unless he just happened to be somewhere where it worked out.

Between meetings on Sunday, Sheffield received a call from Bill Casper. He wanted to know if he could come over and have him sign his book. Sheffield was more than happy to have him come. Later in the evening, he and Marge came over. It had been a while since Sheffield had talked to them. They sat out on

the front porch, looking out towards the mountains talking about his book. Ramona and Marge visited about other things.

“So what do you think of it?” Sheffield asked as he handed the book back to him after personalizing it.

“I think you did a fine job. I'm only about half way through it. I followed your career by getting bits and pieces from Walt and your Dad. This really tells the whole story. You know, I was always kind of envious of you. The only thing I'd say is that I wish there was more about Sheffield in it. You blended yourself into the story, focusing more on the ship as the main character.”

“You're not the first one to make that observation. You know how I have never been one to draw attention to myself. Except, I'm finding that I'm making myself the main character in my next book.”

“You're writing another book? What's this one about?”

“Its supposed to be about the development of naval aviation, but its from my perspective so its turning out to be more about me.”

“Good. I'd like to read that one too. Like I said, I've always been kind of envious of you and all of your travels. I've spent my entire life right here in Roanoke. “

“Sometimes I have envied you for that very reason. I've never been here much and missed out on a lot of family things.”

“Speaking of your family.” Bill said changing the subject. “Your sure stirred up things in the Methodist Church when not only your family, but Geannie's family joined the Mormon Church. Even two of my own sons went with you. I'm not saying its a bad thing, in fact there is something different about Rupert and Willie. I can't quite put my finger on it. They always were good boys, but now they seem to be better men. What made you decide to switch churches anyway?”

Marge heard the question and quickly ended her conversation with Ramona so she could hear Sheffield's answer.

“It was really Geannie that convinced me.”

“How so?” Bill asked.

“Do you remember when our baby died?”

“How could I ever forget that.” Marge said. “It was so sad watching Geannie and you go through that.”

“After that, she started searching for answers to a deeper purpose of life and eternity. At first she turned to Walt, but he wasn't able to satisfy her. For the rest of her life, she made a real study of the Bible, trying to find the answers on her own. She gained a lot of insights and came up with a lot of theories of her own that sounded reasonable to me, but they didn't necessarily square with anything that the Methodist's or

anyone else taught.

“When we lived in Hawaii, we came across the Mormon Temple there, only we didn't know what it was. She got the definite feeling that whatever it was, it was the key to all of her questions and theories. As we left, she wrote down the name of the church on the sign at the gate with the intention of looking into it. Two weeks later she was killed.

“I hadn't given much thought to it until a couple of years ago, I was reading in her Bible when that slip of paper fell out. I remembered the incident and tucked it back in between the pages. The very next day, we received a wedding announcement from the young man who had been my personal assistant. It said that he was being married for time and eternity in the Logan Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The same name that was on that slip of paper. The thing that Geannie kept searching for was this idea of marriage lasting into the eternities.

“I knew that my aid was a Mormon, but I never recalled hearing about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

“Are you going to tell them what really happened?” Ramona interrupted.

“Uhm. I'm not sure if I should.”

“Now you have to tell us.” Marge encouraged.

Ramona and Sheffield looked at each other for a moment. Then Sheffield said, “Go ahead, Sweetheart.”

Ramona proceeded to tell them. “The night before we got the wedding invitation, Geannie came to us and told them we were about to discover the key to what she had been looking for, but for her to have it, we had to find it first.”

“Wait a minute. You actually saw Geannie?”

“We certainly did.” Sheffield answered. “Both of us saw her just as sure as we're looking at you right now.”

“Knowing Geannie, I believe you. Go on.”

“Anyway, I placed a phone call, and we flew out to Utah to go to the wedding. That is when we were first introduced to the Church. When we came home we began investigating it and come to know that it not only answered all of Geannie's questions but it also squared with all of her insights. After making it a matter of study and prayer, we came to know that it was true and decided to be baptized into the Church.

“That's when we told my family and Geannie's what we had discovered. They had all said that if anyone could ever answer her questions, they'd listen to what they had to say. They began looking into for themselves and came to the same conclusion. So it really wasn't me, it was Geannie.”

“That's some story. I never knew all of that. The boys didn't really say a whole lot about why they

switched churches. I think they were afraid to cause a rift in the family.”

“Did you ever ask them?”

“No.”

“I'd suggest that you talk to them about it. If you approach them with an open mind like you have with us, they'll open up to you and tell you how they really feel.” Sheffield encouraged.

“I think we'll do just that. Now you've got us curious.” Marge concluded.

From there, their conversation went on to other subjects, such as the prospects of the wrestling team this year and how Sheffield was enjoying his new career.

The next day all of the Brasons, congregated in the pasture for their Labor Day picnic. The entire family was there, except for Ruth Ann. Sheffield pulled Emmaline and Willie aside and told them about their conversation with his folks the evening before and encouraged them to talk to them.

On Tuesday the 7<sup>th</sup>, Sheffield went into school for a half a day to get ready for the first day of classes the next day. Now that Norma was a junior, she had the car to herself and drove herself and Janet to school. She dropped Janet off at the junior high school where she was in the eighth grade. Sheffield got off to a good start with his government classes. After school, he and Coach Karrington met with the wrestling team candidates and began the process of putting together the team for that year.

During the middle of that week they got a letter from Craig. He was doing well and was excited about school. He assured them that he was getting along fine on his own. He enjoyed college life and had made some new friends. He was also enjoying his classes, but that he needed some money sent to him so he could buy a set of tools for his automotive class.

Ramona wrote back and included a check made out for the amount that he had requested. She wanted to tell him how much she missed him, but didn't want to detract from the good experience that he was having.

The letter from Craig wasn't the only thing coming in the mail. Ever since Sheffield's book was released, he had been getting letters from Reprisal crewmen, thanking him for writing the book. Some of them expressed an interest in having a ship's reunion.

They weren't the only ones that Sheffield heard from. He also heard from Shorty and Freddy who had bought the book. Probably the letter that meant the most to him was the one that he got from his mentor, Admiral Halsey.

Sheffield thought about the notion of a reunion. Trying to reach everyone who had served aboard the ship would be quite a challenge and would take a while to arrange. He thought that the tenth anniversary of the Reprisal's commissioning would be a good time, since it was still two years and nine months away. He was definitely going to need some help.

Letters in regard to his book wasn't the only responses he got. He also received his first royalty check from Random House. It wasn't something someone could make a living at, but it was a significant amount. He decided to use it towards organizing the reunion.

On Friday after School, Sheffield took off in the Staggerwing and flew to Richmond for his book signing there. It too was a very successful event. Like the one in Roanoke, they nearly sold out. After spending the night in Richmond, the next morning he flew on to Norfolk. The signing wasn't until two o'clock in the afternoon, so he used the spare time to call on a dear old friend. He found her at the Norfolk Navy Yard where she had been since July undergoing another refit and repairs for damage to her bow after a collision with a destroyer.

Her bow had been removed and the leading edge of the flight deck had been cut back. She was to receive a new, longer bow and a her flight deck was going to be lengthened. In addition to being lengthened, the flight deck was being strengthened even more to be able to accommodate the new jet aircraft that would soon be joining the fleet. All of the forty millimeter gun tubs that lined the flight deck sat empty. The mounts had been removed to make way for the new three inch dual mounts. She was scheduled to be there until the end of the year.

After calling on the Reprisal, he had lunch before finding his way to the bookstore. During the two hours he was there, he visited with a host of people as he signed their copies of his book. One of the first people in line was another old friend, Paula. She lingered and visited while there was a lull in people wanting to meet the author. She was still seeing the same man that she was seeing the last time he saw her. She indicated that that they had been talking marriage, but no ring yet. Many of those who bought his book that day were associated with the Navy in one way or another.

He ran out of books about the same time that his time was up. After getting a bite to eat, he flew home. Ramona heard the Staggerwing as he circled around and lined up to land. She was waiting for him at the hangar when he came to a stop. As they walked back to the house, she wanted to know all about his trip.

The school year got off to a good start. During the next two weeks he continued working with those who hoped to make the team. After the tryout period, the wrestling team came together. It wasn't as talented of a team as in his first three years, but they had the potential for a good season. With there years behind him now, he was quite comfortable with teaching his government class. As part of his teaching style, he had incorporated something that Geannie had found helpful.

Rather than stand at the front of the classroom, he liked to walk up and down the aisles while teaching his lessons. He found that he got a better response and more participation from the class if he interjected himself into their midst. If a student had a comment or a question, he would approach their desk.

One day in late September, however he found that he was getting a negative response from his second period class, particularly from the girls. Rather than participating as he approached them, they recoiled at his presence. On the other hand the boys found something quite amusing about it. He couldn't figure out what was wrong. Finally the bell rang and class was dismissed.

As the students files out of the classroom. One of the girls who sat at the front of the class handed him a note as she filed past. When he opened the note, his face turned three shades of red. It said, "Mr. Brason, your fly is undone." When the classroom was empty, he hurried and zipped it up before the next class began coming in.

That evening, Ramona got a big kick out of his embarrassment. "No wonder the girls reacted that way. Put yourself in their place. There you are sitting in your desk and right there practically at eye level is their teacher's open fly."

He hadn't realized how bad it must have looked from their vantage point. The next day, the same class again responded positivity to his up close approach.

By October, the recession had ended and Ramona sold some of the property that she had been holding onto and began buying new property. During that time she had learned the value of keeping some rental property as it provided a steady source of return, although managing it sometimes proved to be a headache. The same was true with occasionally carrying the contract, which also yielded interest.

As the wresting season got underway, the teams performance was respectable, in fact they had an even split of wins and losses. The boys worked hard and gave their best, and that was what it was all about.

During the middle of November, he had Norma help him put up the outdoor Christmas lights, since Craig wasn't there to help him. In fact, she had taken over some of the chores that had been his and was a big help. She was tough enough to manhandle a bale of hay and lady enough to turn the boy's heads. A couple of the boys in the branch in particular seemed to be competing for her attention. At five foot six, she had blossomed into a beautiful and lovely young woman.

As usual, they hosted Thanksgiving dinner. Not only was Ruth Ann not there, but neither was Craig. He and Edith were guests of the Ricks family. Other than that, the entire Brason family were together. There were a few new additions and announcements of additions, either by birth or marriage. Emmett was approaching his eightieth birthday and was in quite poor health. In addition to Parkinson's Disease, he was suffering from the general effects of aging.

Sheffield observed his fifty second birthday as the Christmas holiday approached. When the radio station began playing its repertoire of Christmas music, a fun little song by Gene Autry, the Singing Cowboy, about a reindeer with a bright red nose made its debut.

There was also another addition to the holidays festivities. The Roanoke Merchants Association

decided to kick off that year's Christmas shopping season by having a neon star built on top of Mill Mountain. The Roanoke Star, the world's largest freestanding illuminated man-made star, lit up the top of Mill Mountain, sitting 1,045 feet above the city. The eighty eight and a half foot star was visible for miles around. The Brasons could see it plainly from their house in Salem.

As Christmas approached, anticipation mounted. Not only for the holiday but to have Craig come home. Ricks College let on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> and would be out until the second week in January. Since the Magicians had a bye that week, Sheffield looked for a substitute teacher for his class. Unable to find one, he prevailed upon Ramona to cover for him. At first she was apprehensive, but Sheffield reminded her that she used to teach nursing and first aid in the Navy. She reluctantly agreed and with a visit to the school district office, she was approved as a qualified substitute teacher based on her masters degree and navy teaching credentials.

On Friday morning, Ramona went off to school, having studied the lesson plan, she felt confident that she could handle it. Sheffield took off in the Satggerwing and took Roger Rowan along for the ride. After fuel stops in St. Louis and McCook, they arrived in Rexburg in mid afternoon. That night they stayed with Roger's in-laws and the next day returned home with Craig, Edith, and Read. Ramona and the girls had a welcome party for Craig when they arrived home late that afternoon.

When Sheffield went to school on the following Monday, all of his classes unanimously agreed that next time he needed a substitute, that he have Mrs. Brason cover for him. The last day of school before the Christmas break was Friday December 23<sup>rd</sup>. That evening, the Magicians broke their four match losing streak with a win over Lexington High School.

In the blink of an eye Christmas had passed and New Years had ushered in 1950. Sheffield and the girls went back to school on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Having run out of things to do, Craig and Read decided to spend an afternoon revisiting Jefferson High School. After school they stayed around for wrestling practice. The former state champions inspired the struggling team. Craig and Read were well on their way to a successful first year of wrestling at the collegiate level as they competed with other junior college teams and university junior varsity teams through out the Intermountain West.

One day while Sheffield was at school, Craig took it on himself to get out the ladder and take down the outdoor Christmas lights and put them away for another year. On the other hand, the Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants Association who had intended to only light the star on Mill Mountain during the holidays decided to keep it lit all year since it had such immediate popularity.

Craig kept busy changing the oil in all of the vehicles and the tractor. He even gave Norma's car a tune up. Even though it was essentially her car now, Craig had claim on it while he was home for the

holidays.

At the end of the first week of January, it was time to take Craig, Read, and Edith back to school. Since the Magicians had a match on Friday, which they won, evening up their wins and loses for the season, Sheffield took them back on Saturday. This time he took Stirling Austin along for the ride.

They had clear skies all the way, but when they landed in Rexburg, the runway was clear, but huge banks of snow were piled high on either side. They found Craig's car right where they parked it three weeks earlier, buried under eighteen inches of snow. The Virginians were accustomed to snow in the winter from living along the Appalachian Mountains, but not that much snow.

They borrowed a broom and a some snow shovels from the airport maintenance shed and swept off the car and dug it out. When they went to start it, the battery was dead. The airport mechanic pulled his pickup up nose to nose with the car. As he hooked up the jumper cables, he explained that it had been twenty below for the last two weeks and that that day was the first time the temperature had been above zero since Christmas.

After getting the car started, their luggage was unloaded from the plane and put into the trunk of the car. There was a spot in one of the hangars where the plane was put to keep it out of the weather. The five travelers were cold and tired by the time they got to Jed Ricks' house. Read's grandma had a pot of beef stew waiting for them on the stove. Their plan was to turn around a leave on Sunday to fly back to Roanoke, but during the night a warm front moved in from the southwest, bringing another six inches of fresh snow, and it was still snowing, making flying out of the question.

Hoping to leave on Monday instead, Sheffield called home and told Ramona their situation and asked her to take his classes for him on Monday. He also asked her to let Coach Karrington know that he had to take care of wrestling practice. Since it was Sunday, Sheffield and Stirling each borrowed a white shirt and a tie and went to church.

The snow subsided toward mid afternoon, after depositing another two inches. During the night, the wind came up. The thirty mile an hour winds blew around all of that new snow, drifting in the roads. And knocking out the power. On Monday, the first day of the new semester at Ricks College had to be canceled.

During the day, the front moved on to the east and the wind subsided and the streets and roads were plowed. Sheffield called home that afternoon after Ramona got home from school to tell her that they had been stranded for a second day and asked her to cover for him again.

Finally on Tuesday morning, the streets and the runway at the airport were open and the National Weather Service reported favorable conditions. Sheffield and Stirling weren't able to get as early start as they had hoped, which given the time zone changes meant they wouldn't arrive in Roanoke until after dark.

The first part of the flight went well, but they soon caught up with the front as it moved east. The

airport in Cheyenne, Wyoming advised that they should land there and wait out the storm that was causing bad condition's across Nebraska, ruling out flying onto McCook.

Complying with the advisory, Sheffield landed at Jerry Olson Field in Cheyenne. They took a cab into downtown which let them out at the Plains Hotel. It was a very classy hotel that dated back to 1911. After checking into their room, they got something to eat. Since they had only packed enough for over night, and this was now the forth day, they were out of clean clothes. Bessy Ricks was kind enough to wash their clothes the day before, but they still needed a change of clothes for the next day so they used the hotel's laundry facility. Sheffield called Ramona to tell her that they had made it as far as Cheyenne and that they hoped to make it home on Wednesday.

The weather was good across the Great Plains, so on Wednesday morning, Sheffield and Stirling set out again, hoping to make it home that day. They got off to a good start, but the distance was greater than the Staggerwing's range. After a stop for fuel and lunch in Louisville, Kentucky they finally arrived home in mid afternoon and glad to be there. Chantelle had warned them about the winters in Idaho, and now Sheffield knew first hand what she was talking about.

While he was gone, Ramona got along fine with her added role. She actually quite enjoyed it. She particularly liked observing the world that Norma spent her day in while she was away from home. When Sheffield went back to school on Thursday he found his classes right where they needed to be. Ramona had done a good job. His lesson plan that day called for a review of the legislative branch of the government in preparation for a unit test the next day.

A week or so after Sheffield returned from taking Craig back to school, the first of the new crop of calves was born. Over the next three or four weeks, there were elven new calves at the Two Star Ranch. Their brothers and sisters from previous year's crop were now a year old.

Later in January they celebrated Janet's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday.

As the weeks passed, the wrestling team struggled through the rest of the season. By the time the district tournament rolled around, they had six wins and six loses for the season. At the conclusion of the tournament, the season was over and Jefferson didn't have the opportunity of going to the state tournament. Craig, Read and the Ricks College Vikings on the other hand had an exceptional season.

With the coming of Spring, it was round up time at the Two Star Ranch. Again the calves were separated from the cows. Sheffield, Ramona and Roger worked the cattle on horseback while the girls manned the gates. Of the heifers and steers from the previous year, Roger picked out two heifers that he recommended that Sheffield keep in order to replace a couple of the older cows next year. The intent was to begin replacing the breeding stock. Two steers were also cut out to be held back, one to go into the freezer and one to donate to the building fund auction. The rest were loaded up to be taken to the livestock auction.

When the cutting was done, the cows were were turned out into the pasture along with horses and the bull on loan from Roger. As the last of the cattle had been driven through the gate, Janet hurried to close it behind them. One of the cows whirled around and made a dash for her calf through the partially closed gate. As she charged past Janet, it stepped on her left foot.

Janet screamed as she jumped up and down holding her foot, crying profusely. Ramona rode up and dismounted Roxy before coming to stop. She put her arm around her a helped her out of the corral and sat her down on a bale of hay. Roger and Sheffield quickly cutout the cow and drove her out of the coral and Norma shut the gate behind it.

Sheffield dismounted Red and scrambled over the fence. By the time he got to Janet's side, Ramona had her shoe and sock off. Her big toe was purple and had began to swell. "We need to get her into the house." Ramona ordered.

Her dad and Roger picked her up on either side and carried her into the house, the manure on their boots leaving tracks on the floor, and set her down on the couch. "Norma, get the first aid kit." Ramona directed.

With everyone hovering over her, she began to treat her foot with a salve to keep the swelling down. "Will, she be alright?" Sheffield asked with concern.

"Give it an hour or so and I'll have a better idea."

Sheffield went into their bedroom and retrieved his vial of consecrated oil and he and Roger administered to her.

With Janet taken care of for the moment, Sheffield and Roger took Norma with them to finish their job, while Ramona stayed with Janet.

Back out in the corral, Norma's job was to hold down the calves while Roger branded them with the Two Star brand and Sheffield banded the bull calves with the elasticator. The whole job didn't take more than a forty five minutes and they were done, except for the cows and calves rending the air with they bawling and bellowing for each other.

While Roger put things away, Sheffield and Norma rushed back into the house to see how Janet was. Before they could ask, Ramona announced, "We have to get her to the hospital right now. The swelling is getting worse and the throbbing is causing a lot of pain."

They helped her out to the car put her across the back seat, with her foot elevated on a pillow and her head on Ramona's lap. Sheffield got behind the wheel while Norma got in the passenger side and hurried off to the hospital.

The doctor on call took one look at the situation. With Ramona at her side and Sheffield and Norma holding back, he said, "This doest look good. Let's see what we can do."

"I'm a nurse." Ramona declared. "I'm staying with her."

"Alright." the doctor agreed. "Put her on that gurney and follow me."

Sheffield and Norma watched as they wheeled Janet down the hall and around the corner. All they could do was wait. After twenty minutes or so, Roger found them and asked how Janet was.

"Were still waiting to find out." Sheffield answered.

"I've got a truck load of cattle out in the parking lot. I'd better get them into the stockyard. Call me later and tell me how she is."

After Roger left, they waited a while longer. The time seemed to go by very slowly. Finally, they saw Ramona walking down the hall toward them. Sheffield and Norma rose to their feet and waited for her to come closer.

"How is she?" Sheffield asked.

"We had to take off her toe." Ramona said. "But she'll be alright. The doctor wants to keep her over night to make sure her foot doesn't get infected."

"Can we see her?"

"She's sedated right now. Why don't we go home and clean up and get a something to eat. Then we can come back. She should be awake by then."

When they returned to the hospital later, they found her in her room, awake and alert. They gathered around her bed as she sat up.

"How are you, Sweetheart?" Sheffield asked.

"Kind of numb, but it doesn't hurt like it did. I guess I won't be competing track for the rest of the season."

"No, I don't suppose you will." Sheffield replied. "Too bad, you're the fastest girl in the eighth grade."

"Its a good thing we still have my crutches from when I broke my leg."

"Its always something with you, isn't it." Norma said as she hugged her sister.

They stayed with Janet for a couple of hours before going back home. Sheffield called Roger and told him what had happened. Then he called someone to take his Sunday School class at the last minute.

They next morning, which was Sunday, they returned to the hospital. They had to wait for the doctor to come around and examine her before he could discharge her. When he did, he found no sign of infection. "You know what to do, Missus Brason. Let me send you with some gauze and bandages. Bring her to my office on Friday and let me take another look."

He left and they checked her out of the hospital. Sheffield brought the car around while Norma wheeled her out to the curb, with Ramona following right behind. They took her home and propped her up on the couch where she watched while Ramona whipped up a batch of pancakes. That afternoon they left

her home while they went to sacrament meeting. Word had got around about Janet's latest accident and everyone showed concern for her. The next morning, Janet hobbled out to the car and Norma drove her to school.

During the week, Ramona changed the dressing and bandages on Janet's foot. On Friday she picked her up at school and took her to the doctor. Everything looked good. He told Ramona to keep doing what she had been doing and bring her back in two weeks to have the stitches taken out. He said that she would have to use her crutches and stay off her foot for another four to six weeks.

With the wrestling season over, Sheffield turned his attention to finishing his second book. In the meantime, Random House informed him that second printing of his first book produced another twenty thousand copies. By the time school let out, he had finished it. Again Ferron Alder agreed to look it over.

In the meantime, Janet's foot healed and she was getting around without her crutches. At times she experienced a little tenderness where her big toe had been. Just like Sheffield, she now walked with a gimp. She had missed the rest of the track season. Determined to make the track team next year, she began running again, toe or no toe.

School let out on Wednesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of May and two days later was Norma's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. The next day, with Ramona as his traveling companion, Sheffield flew to Rexburg to bring Craig, Read, and Edith home for the summer. Since Craig hadn't had any flight time lately, Sheffield let him take the controls for the first leg of the return flight. This time it was a simple overnigher. Out on Friday and back on Saturday.

That gave them until Tuesday to prepare of the Brason Memorial Day picnic. The entire family was there, even Ruth Ann and Joseph and their two children flew up from Denison. Ruth Ann had always been flighty and moody, but this time she was more so than usual. Something seemed wrong. Ramona chided Sheffield for saying that he was afraid that she was going to make a run for it.

As for the rest of Shenan's family, Joe and Adelle brought their new baby, barely four weeks old. Danny's wife Melissa and Wendalynn were both expecting as well. Wendalynn and Merl were slowing warming up toward the church. Delbert also brought his girlfriend, but there was no mention of an engagement.

As for Walt's family, Tim had just graduated from Virginia Tech with his degree in broadcast engineering. Even before graduating he had a job lined up with WSLs-FM, one of the local radio stations and he and Vonda moved back to Roanoke. With a baby on the way in the fall, they were interested in buying one of Ramona's houses. They weren't the only ones expecting, Emmaline and Willie were expecting in July and Sylvia and Scott in September. Curtis brought his fiancé. They were planning a June wedding. That meant that Walt and Sarah had a busy few weeks ahead of them.

Emmett was now confined to a wheelchair and was doing even more poorly. Age was also taking its

toll on Ellen as well. They were taking of selling their home and moving into one of those retirement homes. The consensus among their children and grandchildren was that they would be happier and live longer if they remained in their home. Sarah and Emily had already began switching off with Ramona in looking in on them at least once a day.

During the picnic, Red and Roxy were saddled up and available for any one who wanted to ride them. At one point, Craig and Edith mounted up and slipped away for a while.

Two days later, the world entered that serene time of the year known as June. The first two weeks were an exciting time for the Roanoke Branch. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, which was Ramona's forty seventh birthday, President George Albert Smith, who had been in Washington D.C. to dedicate a statue of Brigham Young in the nation's capitol, came to town that morning and toured the new meetinghouse prior to its dedication that was scheduled for the following week. The last of the debts incurred during the construction had just been paid. As he toured the building, he was accompanied by the branch and district leadership, including the branch Relief Society Presidency to which Ramona was part of.

Following the tour, the members of the branch meet in the chapel to hear from the Prophet before he continued on his return trip to Salt Lake City that included other stops along the way. Before the meeting, he greeted the members and remembered the Brason family form exactly one year before when he performed their sealings in the Salt Lake Temple.

In his remarks he said that they were planting seeds for the future, referring to the growth of the church in the area. Since the Brasons and Austins had joined the church, other converts had been added to the branch, as well as a couple of families from out west who had moved into the area. He said that the growth would continue at an accelerated pace and prophesied that they would be a stake within twenty years. Not only that but he also prophesied that with in twenty five years there would be a temple in the east, within a reasonable distance from Roanoke.

The following week was district conference. Typically it would have been in May, but it was postponed to coincide with the dedication of the chapel. Also out of the ordinary, the general session of the conference didn't begin until four o'clock in the afternoon. President Price and the presiding authority, Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of Twelve, had been at a similar conference that morning in North Carolina to dedicate another meetinghouse.

The conference proceeded with the usual format. After the business portion of the conference, a number of speakers addressed the members. Following President Price's remarks the district choir, in which Ramona participated, sang "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning". Elder Benson was the final speaker and at the end of his remarks, he offered the dedicatory prayer for the meetinghouse.

By the middle of June Ferron called Sheffield to say that he had finished going through the

manuscript. Sheffield invited him out and they spent an afternoon discussing it. Again Ferron had some suggestions to improve it. Sheffield took his comments and suggestions serious and began making the recommended changes. It would take at least a month before he would be ready to have the manuscript ready for the typist.

Walt and Sarah's son, Curtis, married Georgia Pack on Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup>. Georgia was a recent convert from Bedford, twenty five miles east of Roanoke. She had been attending Hollins University where she came in contact with the church. Curtis met her at an M-men and Gleaner dance. They were married by President Roger Rowan in a civil ceremony held at the meetinghouse, followed by a reception.

One week later on Saturday night June 24<sup>th</sup> while Sheffield and Ramona were getting ready for bed, the radio was on in the background. The regularly scheduled news broadcast came over the air. "This is ABC Radio News. And now for the top new story at this hour. At four a.m. Sunday morning June 25<sup>th</sup> Tokyo Time, Communist North Korea began an artillery attack across the thirty eight parallel on positions in South Korea, followed by a large scale invasion. One hour ago at eleven a.m., nine o'clock p.m. Eastern Daylight Time the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Pyongyang broadcast a declaration of war on South Korea.

"The White House and the State Department are following the situation closely. The President has convened a meeting of key military and diplomatic advisors at his residence at Blair House to formulate a response.

"Sources say that a sneak attack on such a large scale could only have been conducted with the aid and support of the Soviet Union. President Truman is holding Moscow responsible for this act of aggression.

"As of last report, communist troops have captured the town of Kaesong, just forty miles northwest of Seoul. It is believed that eight American Methodist missionaries were in Kaesong. According to Ambassador John Muccio, there are two thousand Americans in Korea, including a small military contingency. Stay tuned for more developments as they come in.

And now, in other news..."

Sheffield and Ramona looked at each other in stunned silence for a moment.

"That doesn't sound good." Ramona said. "What do you think it will mean?"

"No, its not good. Teaching government had forced me to stay on top of current events. I can tell you this much, President Truman's position is one of 'containment'. In other words 'stopping the Communists from gaining any more territory'. I'm afraid that within days, we'll be at war again."

In the blink of an eye, the serenity of June had been broken and once again the United States was on the brink of war.

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The part about President George Albert Smith touring the meetinghouse is from "Roanoke History Talk, Beulah Henderson Riley": A talk given by Beulah Riley in the Spring of 1993 at the Roanoke 1st Ward-- found at <http://beulahhendersonriley.blogspot.com/2007/04/roanoke-history-talk-beulah-henderson.html> According the Deseret News Church Almanac, President Smith was in Washington DC to dedicate a statue of Brigham Young on June 1, 1950. The actual timing of the visit to Roanoke is not known.

The new branch meetinghouse in Roanoke and one in North Carolina were dedicated in June 1950 by Elder Ezra Taft Benson according to the October 1950 Improvement Era. According to the biography of Ezra Taft Benson by Sheri Dew, he was in the east for BSA national meetings and returned to Salt Lake City on June 11<sup>th</sup>. No mention of going to Roanoke.

The beginning of the Korean War was as described. During the presidency of Harry Truman, Blair House served as the residence of the President of the United States, while the interior of the White House, was being renovated from 1949 to 1951.

