

Chapter XXXV

Rules of Engagement

January 1, 1952 – February 9, 1952

It was good to be home again, despite how wonderful it was to spend Christmas with Sheffield. Nevertheless, the return trip was exhausting. That gave them the rest of New Year's Day and all of the next to recuperate before going back to school on the 3rd.

There were still unopened gifts under the tree that couldn't be taken with them. Later in the afternoon, Craig and Edith came up from Bedford to celebrate a belated Christmas and the rest of New Years Day and to hear all about their trip. Before going to bed, Ramona wrote to Sheffield to let him know that they got home alright and that the flight had been uneventful.

The next morning, she took it out to the mail box. From the looks of the place, things had been taken care of while they were gone. The Rowans were kind enough to feed the livestock. Ramona called to thank them and to tell them that she had seen Wade and that he looked good. They were anxious to see him after being gone for two and half years.

By Wednesday, they were rested sufficiently and returned to school. Craig came back up on Saturday and took down the outdoor Christmas lights and dispose of the Christmas tree. He announced that he dad dropped ROTC this semester because it was too much with being in the reserve.

All week Ramona looked for a letter from Sheffield. One finally came toward the end of the week.

Saturday January 5, 1952

The Sea of Japan aboard the USS Reprisal

Dear Ramona and Girls

It sure was good to have you come all that way to spend Christmas with me. It meant an awful lot to me. Hopefully I'll be able to come home for a visit in a few months. They can't keep us here indefinitely.

After watching your plane leave, I returned to the ship and began getting ready for this portion of the cruise. On Thursday morning the 3rd, we had two inches of wet, heavy snow on the flight deck. Later that morning we got underway and returned to sea. As we steamed south into warmer temperatures, the snow all melted and the air group landed aboard.

This morning we rendezvoused with the task force and I resumed command. As we joined up, the Antietam was detached to Yokosuka. Once on station we immediately

resumed air operations against the communists.

Having the Chinese involved is bad enough, but what most people don't know is that the Soviets are indirectly involved as well. Although the Migs that our pilots encounter have North Korean markings, many of them are flown by Russian pilots. Not only that, but their maritime patrol planes flying out of Vladivostok keep a close eye on us and report our every movement, as do their submarines. Enough about the war. Maybe this year it will wrap up. One can only hope.

I'm glad that everything was in order when you got home. The cows should begin calving anytime now. Usually they are fine, but if one has a problem, call Roger. He'll know what to do. That's what I'd have to do if I were there anyway.

I know that this is short. I hope to write more next time. Get me just close by telling you all how much I love you and I miss you already. Take care and I hope to hear from you again soon.

Love Sheffield

On Sunday when Ramona and the girls went to church, Wade had returned home and reported his mission in sacrament meeting that evening. Norma made it a point to go out of her way to welcome him home.

Sheffield was right about the cows. The first calf was born on Saturday with the next one the following Tuesday. After that there were two or three a day for the next few days.

On Thursday afternoon when Janet came in from gathering eggs, she said, "Mom, I think there is a cow having trouble. She's acting really strange."

"Let's go have a look." Ramona said as she reached for her coat.

Once they got out to the corral, Ramona could tell right off what was the matter. The calf's two front legs were out to the knees but there was no sign of head. It was obviously turned.

"Run back to the house and call over to Rowans and let them know that we have a problem. Oh and bring Norma back with you. I might need your help."

Ramona sized up the situation and tried to figure what would be the best course of action. During all of her years as a nurse, she hadn't been in on very many births. While waiting for the girls, she gently caressed the cow's neck, as she was in great discomfort.

"Okay, Mom." Janet said. "I called over to Rowans and talked to Sister Rowan. She said she'd see

who could get away and have them come right over.”

“Okay good.” Ramona said as she looked around. “Janet, bring me a piece of baling twine from off that post over by the haystack. Norma, come over here by me.”

Norma went around behind the cow laying on its side with two tiny legs sticking out. She had been around when calves had been born before and wasn't squeamish about it.

When Janet returned with the twine, Ramona said, “Thanks. Now get on the other side of her and hold her tail out of the way. Norma, come a little bit closer to me. She's likely to kick.”

Ramona took off her watch and ring and handed them to Janet. “Here, put these in your pocket.”

Then she looped the twine around her wrist and reached into the cow's womb. After feeling around for a moment, she found the calf's head and slipped the twine around its neck. When she removed her hand it was covered with blood and mucus.

“Okay Norma, here's where you come in. Take the other leg and help me gently push the calf back inside.”

Norma took a hold of the other wet slimy leg and together they pushed it back in until just the hooves were showing. As they did, the cow grunted, bellowed, and thrashed her free hind leg. Ramona gave a gentle tug on the twine and straightened the calf's head.

“Okay, old girl.” she said to the cow. “Its all up to you.”

The cow grunted and bellowed some more and the calf's head was now partially visible. After a moment or two she didn't make any more progress.

“Alright Norma. She's going to need a little help. Take the calf by the leg again and when I say, give it a tug.

“Okay, Now”

Together they pulled on the legs just enough for the head to clear.

“I think she can handle it from here.” Ramona said.

The cow gave another snort, and the calf spilled out onto the fresh straw, its wet, warm body steaming in the cold air. Ramona used her hand to whip the mucus from the calf's nose and it began breathing on its own. The cow delivered the afterbirth and stood up, turned around and began licking her baby to clean him up.

Just as the calf tried to stand up for the first time, Wade Rowan was at their side. “It looks like you took care of it. What was the matter?”

Ramona rehearsed the dilemma and told him what she did about it.

“Thats exactly what I would have done.”

Norma was horrified that Wade saw her like that. Her hair was a mess with straw clinging to it and

her hands were covered with blood and mucus. She was certain that was not how to impress a boy and get him to notice you.

Actually, Wade was impressed. He thought to himself, "Wow, now there's a girl who can be elegant and refined, yet isn't afraid to get dirty." Read had told him how she was a big help when it came to hauling hay. Needless to say, he noticed. When his eyes met hers, a spark went both ways.

"I think the cow can handle it from here." Ramona announced. "Why don't we all go in and have some hot chocolate and warm up. Would you like to join us Wade?"

They all washed their hands and cleaned up a little and sat down for some hot cocoa and visited. The conversation centered on Wade. Ramona asked him, "So Wade, now that you've been home a little over a week, have you figured out what you want to do?"

He said, "If I don't get drafted, I want to work with my dad on the ranch and in the fall, enroll in Roanoke College and turn my associates degree in livestock production from Ricks College into a bachelor's degree in animal husbandry."

When it came time to go, Norma followed him out to his pickup. Neither one said anything, which caused some awkward tension in the air. As he was climbing into the cab, he asked. "So Norma, would you like to go out some time?"

"Yes." she responded trying to conceal her excitement. "I'd like that very much."

"Alright then. I'll call you."

At that, he shut the door and started it up and drove away. Norma stood there and watched as he pulled out of the driveway and onto the highway. That's when she stopped being the refined young lady and let the giddy teenager out as she ran back into the house.

For the rest of the week, Norma anticipated a telephone call from Wade that never came. Ramona encouraged her to be patient. After all, he did just get home and it takes time to readjust. In the meantime, Norma received a second letter from Quinn Goodey. He seemed to be much more interested in her than she was in him. The letter that she had written to him was more like a letter one would send a pen pal, like Janet's relationships with Private Orrin Powell, Airman Sedric Orchard, and Jerry Gover. Norma even turned down a date, hoping for a last minute call from Wade.

Saturday the 20th was Janet's sixteenth birthday. For her birthday, Ramona threw a sweet sixteen party for her like she did for Norma when she turned sixteen. She was already on the radar of several boys, both at church and at school. It was only a matter of time now and someone was bound to ask her out.

During Sunday School, Wade did sit with Norma and talked to her but never mentioned anything about going out. She was beginning to wonder if he had the same tendencies that Read had displayed. After sacrament meeting, she was hoping to talk to Wade, but he left without so much as a glance in her

direction. Then good old reliable Grant Furness approached her and asked her out to a dance on Friday night at Roanoke College. She and Grant were good friends and had a good time together, but they would never be more than that. Since Wade was being illusive, she accepted Grant's invitation. As it turned out Janet was asked out by Grant's brother, Albert, to go roller skating.

When she had just about given up, during the middle of the week, she got a call from Wade, to ask her out for Friday night. She had tell him that she already had a date, but was quick to encourage, "But, I'd love to go out with you." Rather than leave it up to him to call back another time, she added, "What are you doing on Saturday?"

As it turned out, he was able to rearrange his plans and asked her out for Saturday instead. The plan was for him to pick her up at seven and go get something to eat and go to a movie. Finally!

Even though she had two dates to look forward too, it was the one with Wade that she was excited about. She found herself daydreaming and not paying attention in her classes. Her notes that she was supposed to be taking consisted of doodles of Wade's name and hearts and flowers.

The rest of the week seemed to pass slowly. Finally, Saturday arrived with great anticipation. She was meticulous in getting ready. First a long hot bath, she didn't want to get her hair wet in the shower. She picked out a black poodle skirt with a white snowflake and a white sweater and applied just the right amount of perfume. She couldn't decide whether to wear her up or down. She settled on up when Ramona suggested that it made her look elegant and sophisticated.

She was ready and waiting when Wade pulled into the driveway. Rather than driving the old pickup that he showed up in previously, he pulled in in a 1947 Mercury Coupe that he had just bought earlier in the week. When he came to the door, Ramona invited him to come in. He was all dressed up in his suit, complete with a short brimmed fedora. He looked like the gentleman that he was.

He helped her on with her coat and they walked side by side out to his car. When he opened the passenger side door, she slid over into the middle of the bench seat to sit next to him. He smiled what she took as approval, as he looked at her when he got behind the wheel.

She wasn't sure what he had in mind for dinner, perhaps a burger or pizza. No, instead he took her to a nice sit down restaurant where he treated her to a grilled salmon steak. She found that he was easy to talk to and he made her laugh. He was complimentary of how she looked, especially her hair. He even mentioned how sweet she smelled.

After dinner he took her to the Grandin Theater to see "The Greatest Show on Earth" set in the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The story was centered on two trapeze artists competing for the center ring, the circus manager running the show, and a mysterious clown who never removed his makeup. The film featured the actual 1951 troupe of fourteen hundred people and hundreds of animals. The

two and half hour movie directed by Cecil B. DeMille was certainly destined to win an Oscar for best picture.

As grand as the evening had been, the best part was when he walked her to the door holding her hand. He looked into her eyes and said, "I had a wonderful time, Norma."

"Me too."

"Would it be alright if I called on you again sometime."

"Yes, I'd like that very much."

"How about next week."

"Yes. That would be fine."

"Great. I'll give you a call then. Goodnight"

"Goodnight, Wade." Norma said as she turned to go through the door that he held open for her. She practically floated into to house where Ramona was waiting to hear all about her evening.

What was even better was the next day when he came and sat down by her in Sunday School and then again in Sacrament Meeting. After Church they stayed for a district M Men Gleaner fireside, followed by some refreshments. This time when he walked her to the door, she invited him to come in for a while. He ended up staying for about an hour telling Norma, Janet, and Ramona more about Japan.

Ramona's latest letter contained all of the news from home. She told of the girl's dates, especially how Norma was crazy about Wade Rowan. She mentioned that all of the cows had calved, and the recent win by the Magicians. It also included the latest news of what was going on in his family and the branch. On average her letters came about every ten days. They were the one bright spot in his otherwise weary routine of the business of war, as he called it.

Another diversion was the serviceman's group meetings in his wardroom each Sunday. Sheffield always tried to arrange to be there, but once in a while there was something that demanded his attention. The next Sunday he had the assignment to present a combination talk and lesson and had been giving some thought to what he might talk about.

He enjoyed his association with other members of the Church, even though they were all young enough to be his sons, even Lieutenant Kirk who was thirty one. He appreciated the knowledge and insight that Seaman Carter and the other returned missionaries had and he learned a lot from them. Seaman Goodey and Airman Orchard were still talking about Norma and Janet and had each exchanged letters with them. They even loved to show off the pictures with them from the photo booth to their shipmates and brag that they were the Admiral's daughters. They wanted to know if they'd be there to meet him at the dock when the ship eventually returned to Norfolk, because they wanted to see them again. Sheffield didn't know how to tell Quinn that Norma didn't feel the same way for him that he did for her.

The members of his staff had discovered his association with the group, but no one questioned it. All they knew was that he was attending church services with them. His staff knew that he was a Mormon and went out of their way to respect his values by refraining from smoking or swearing in his presence.

Lieutenant Moncur found him to be a refreshing change from the run of the mill career Navy men. He himself tried to adhere to the same values and wondered what it was that made the Admiral what he was. It was obviously his religious beliefs. Of all the men on the staff, he probably knew him the best and had the most access to him. He even read both of his books in order to learn more about this remarkable individual. Perhaps one day he would take the opportunity to ask him. It was obvious that protocol would not permit a superior officer to impose his personal religious beliefs and practices upon a subordinate. But Phil knew him well enough that if he asked, his boss would be open with him.

Phil had been raised Baptist and his wife Catholic but they found themselves to be unwilling to join each other's churches and had been looking for something they could both agree on. Perhaps what Admiral Brason and his group had would be that something. They were certainly the kind of people that he and his wife wanted to be and to raise their children to be. But he didn't know how to go about inviting himself to one of their meetings.

Day after day, Admiral Brason directed the task force as they sent sortie after sortie against the enemy. Inevitably, his orders sent men to their deaths or worse, imprisonment at the cruel hands of the communists. That realization weighed heavy on his mind.

The main targets continued to be railroad tracks, highways, and bridges and the troops and supplies they carried to the front lines. It almost seemed futile because the resourceful enemy would have the damage repaired in a day or two, only to be hit again.

The limited number of night capable aircraft kept the pressure on the enemy during the night. He often wished one of his carriers was dedicated to night operations, like the Reprisal had been in the last months of the Pacific War.

Sheffield thought that it would be better to hit the source of the enemies supply lines. But those areas were off limits because of their proximity to the Yalu River; the border with China. President Truman wanted to avoid an all out war with China. In Sheffield's mind, they were already at war with China. Why not risk hitting the manufacturing and staging areas along the boarder, not to mention the hydroelectric power plants along the river.

Eventually there was enough demand from the commanders in the field on the brass in Tokyo and Washington to make those targets available. The Air Force thought the job should be theirs but they couldn't do it without crossing into Chinese air space. But the Navy could.

The Skyraiders, Panthers, and Corsairs weren't the dive bombers that the Dauntlesses, Helldivers,

Pumas, and Crusaders had been, but they were pretty close. They could swoop down on a target and deliver their ordnance and get out without crossing the River. The only problem was the deadly anti-aircraft fire they would face on their way down, not to mention the threat of MiGs. The rules of engagement banned combat sorties across the Yalu River into China except in the case of "hot pursuit." when circumstance gave them a shot at a fleeing MiG.

In early February, Sheffield received orders and was given a specific target along the Yalu River. However, his orders stipulated that the bridges and dams could only be hit on the North Korean side of the river. "How the hell do you bomb half a bridge?" Commander Fendwick, the Operations Officer, muttered.

Well before sunrise on the morning of February 5th Admiral Brason had Task Force 77 in position eighty five miles east of Wonsan. The target was the dam and hydroelectric power plant at Chosan in the Chagang province, the first of several dams on the Yalu River. The dams had been built by the Japanese prior to the Second World War and provided most of the electrical power in North Korea. This dam alone accounted for about twenty percent of the power supply. It was hoped that a sudden loss of that much electrical power could cause the entire power grid to overload, which would cause the rest to fail, at least temporarily.

Sheffield was up early and on the flag bridge going over the final plans for the operation. In the per-dawn darkness, he gave the order for the task force to turn into the wind. Lieutenant Commander Gaylord Harriman, the communications officer, passed along the order and it was flashed via morris code. In unison the Reprisal, Essex, Antietam, Valley Forge and their escorts made a sweeping turn into the direction of the wind and awaited further orders.

The sky was overcast with a stiff breeze that whipped up the sea. Sheffield zipped up his brown leather flight jacket, adjusted its fleece collar around his ears, pulled down his cap tight onto his head and stepped outside onto the catwalk that ran along the flag bridge. With his bare hands gripping the railing, he looked up and down the length of the flight deck full of Corsairs and Skyraiders.

The roar of their engines brought back memories from years past when he was sitting in the cockpit awaiting the order to launch. The big blue Skyraiders were monsters compared to the old silver bi-wing SBC Helldiver with yellow wings that he last flew as the commander of the Enterprise Air Group exactly twelve years earlier before becoming the executive officer, which ended his flying career.

All of those years that he spent training and preparing for war and now in his second war, he had never flown an actual combat mission, other than riding in the rear seat of a Dauntless that morning when the world changed forever.

Sheffield looked at his watch and waited for the second hand to sweep around to twelve. At precisely 0600, an hour and a half before sunrise, he looked over his shoulder at Commander Gaylord and

simply said, "Launch."

Again the order was relayed to the signal bridge. The long and short flashes of light, spelling out "Dot dash dot dot ... dot dash ... dot dot dash dash dot ... dash dot dash dot ... dot dot dot dot" in Morse Code to convey the order to the other three carriers, while on the Reprisal, the bull horn announced over the roar of the engines, "Launch planes!"

Sheffield watched as the first Corsair was guided into place on the starboard catapult. While it was being attached to the catapult equipment, a second Corsair was being directed to the port catapult. As soon as the first plane was ready, it was flung off the end of the flight deck into the darkness at one hundred miles an hour.

He stood there and watched as plane after plane were catapulted into the air. Eventually, his bare hands became numb from the cold and he returned inside of the flag bridge and settled into his comfortable captain's chair to watch the rest of the show.

In all, the four carriers sent aloft fifteen night Corsairs a dozen Skyraiders and nine radar jamming Skyraiders, followed by forty eight Corsairs and sixty Skyraiders, all loaded with a full payload bombs, rockets, and external fuel tanks. The planes formed up and by headed for the target, guided by the radar equipped Corsairs and Skyraiders.

Once the strike group was on its way, Sheffield said to Lieutenant Moncur, "Call down to Alejandro and tell him I'll be down for breakfast in ten minutes."

He walked over to the chart table to check their position on the map and ordered the task force to change course and head further out to sea. Again the message was flashed in Morse Code.

When Sheffield arrived at his wardroom, Alejandro brought him a stack of pancakes, two eggs over easy and three strips of bacon with a tall glass of milk and small glass of orange juice. While he had breakfast, the strike group crossed the coastline just east of Hungnam, 125 miles from the target, and flew low over the mountains at five thousand feet to elude detection. The AD-4Qs were effective in disrupting enemy radar.

Sheffield had enough time to enjoy his breakfast before returning to the flag bridge. He immediately ordered the task force to once again turn into the wind. At 0700 he gave the order to launch the jet fighters. Ninety six Panthers from aboard the four carriers were launched in the pre-dawn light. Of these all but twenty four carried a full bomb load, the rest were prepared to intercept any MiGs that were certain to show up. The faster jets rendezvoused with the propeller aircraft fifty miles southeast of Chosan just before sunrise.

With the strike group on its way, there was nothing to do but wait. During times like these, Sheffield always wished he was behind the controls of the plane leading them in, rather than remaining behind. But

that had long since been someone else's job. Radio silence was broken as the attack commenced. The first planes to swoop down the slopes of the Kangnam Mountains were the Panthers which smothered the anti-aircraft batteries with rockets and machine gun fire.

Caught off guard, the enemy was initially slow to react. A call went out for air cover and thirty six MiG-15s at the Chinese airbase at Antung, one hundred twenty five miles to the southeast, were scrambled. With a maximum speed of over a thousand miles an hour, it didn't take them long to arrive. The American attack was well underway with considerable damage being done to the dam, turbines, generators, and transmission lines, when someone called out "MiGs!" over the intercom.

That particular region along the Yalu River all the way to the Yellow Sea had been dubbed "MiG Alley" by the Air Force. It was the site of numerous dogfights between U.S. and Communist fighter jets. The swept wing, Soviet built MiG-15 had caught the allies off guard when they first made their debut early in the war. The Air Force's F-86 Sabre jets could hold their own against them, but the Panthers were out classed. But just like the sturdy little Wildcat up against the Japanese Zero ten years earlier, Panther pilots learned to compensate and could hold their own.

The power went off within seconds of the first bombs. While the attack continued, several dogfights broke out as the Panthers fought to keep the MiGs from disrupting the attack. At times some of the Panthers crossed the river. In the brutal fight, both American and Chinese planes fell from the sky. In some instances the pilots were able to bale out.

As the last of the Navy planes completed their drops, the dam had been breached, the power station was completely destroyed. and the North Korean half of two nearby bridges had fallen into the river and had been swept away by the high, fast moving water that only moments before was backed up behind the dam. The damage was so extensive that it would take years to rebuild. When they began to regroup and retire from the area, a fresh batch of about a dozen MiGs arrived. The Panthers had their hands full keeping them away from the slower propeller planes. Even a few of the feisty Corsairs joined the fray.

In the end, in addition to the destruction of the target, at least eighteen MiGs had been shot down. The cost to the Navy was fifteen Panthers, nine Corsairs, and twelve Skyraiders, either to MiGs or anti-aircraft firer. It wasn't known how many pilots survived, only be captured.

On the return flight, seven more planes that had been damaged in the battle went down, some over North Korea, others out over the water. three more crashed while landing aboard the carries. One particularly bad crash was aboard the Reprisal.

Sheffield was watching from his perch outside of the flag bridge as the strike group was brought aboard. All went well with the first several planes. Sheffield gripped the railing as he watched an undamaged Corsair returning form the mission miss the arresting cables and shear off half of the right wing

as it bounced into the superstructure. As it flipped over onto its back and went into the crash barrier, he slapped the rail with his hand in frustration.

While the flight deck crews were extricating the pilot from the wreckage, Sheffield asked Lieutenant Commander Melvin Manchester, the air officer, "Who's flying three one one?"

Commander Manchester looked through his copy of the flight roster that had been provided by Reprisal's air department. "It's Lieutenant Daniel Kirk, sir." He answered.

A knot formed in Sheffield's stomach as he said a silent prayer for his friend. He watched anxiously until he saw Dan standing on the flight deck, walking on his own.

"Have that man report to me as soon as he has been checked out at the sick bay." Sheffield ordered.

The crash caused a delay of twenty minutes while the wreck was cleared away and taken below. Once the deck was clear, flight operations resumed in recovering the rest of the Reprisal's aircraft.

Sheffield believed that if the landing deck were angled off to port, the plane could have powered up and gotten airborne again to circle around for another attempt.

Over all, the Battle of Chosan was a tactical success but had mixed strategic results. The power outage wasn't as widespread as hoped for and it had little impact on the negotiations at the peace talks. Admiral Brason was given credit for masterminding the dawn attack. He had a record of such attacks that dated back to the first raids made by the Enterprise and Yorktown exactly ten years earlier when he was Admiral Halsey's air officer, and later the daring the raids on the U-boat base at Bordeaux and the German airfields in Northern Norway .

When all of the surviving aircraft had been recovered, Sheffield took his task force farther out to sea to regroup and replenish.

Later that day, he was in his office reviewing the action reports when there was a knock at the door. "Come in." he answered.

The door opened and in walked Lieutenant Kirk with his arm in a sling.

"Dan," Sheffield said to his younger friend. "Sit down."

"Thank you, sir." He said as he saluted.

"Say that was some landing this morning, how did you fare?"

"I was lucky to walk away with nothing more than a dislocated shoulder and a bump on the head. Just enough to keep me grounded for a few weeks."

"I didn't know that it was you, until I asked who's plane it was. When they told me that it was you, my heart sank. I'm sure glad that your alright."

"Thanks. Me too, sir."

“What happened?”

“I'm not sure. My approach was good. The LSO didn't indicate that anything was wrong. Then when I hit the deck, it was just enough to cause me to bounce and my hook missed the wire. I had just enough torque to pull me to starboard. When I saw that I was heading for the island, I thought I was a goner.”

“Let me ask you something. If you would have had a clear deck ahead of you, do think you could have gone full throttle and had enough power to pull up and get airborne again?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Here's something that I've been thinking about lately. There is theory going around that if the landing area was angled to port, away from the island, that a plane could do exactly that and not endanger itself or any planes that are parked forward. Here's a drawing I've made of how it might look. What do you think?”

“It looks a little odd, like it would make the ship too heavy to port.”

“Yeah, I admit that it looks a funny. As far as weight distribution, things can be done to balance it. I've all ready sent one letter to Washington in favor of studying the concept. After your crash, I think I'm going to write another one. I think the idea has some merit. While you're grounded, give it some thought and let me know what you think.”

“I'll do that.”

“So Dan,” Sheffield said changing the subject, “How's Daphne...” The rest of their conversation was of a personal nature as they discussed their wives and children and the news from back home.

As Lieutenant Kirk was leaving, Sheffield said, “I'll see you at our next group meeting.”

Later that afternoon, the Reprisal was detached while the task force resumed bombing railroad tracks, highways, and bridges. Two days later on the 9th she returned to Yokosuka for a well deserved rest.

When the ship docked at Pier 12, the mail was brought aboard and with it, Ramona's last letter. After Lieutenant Moncur brought it to him, Sheffield retired to his office to read it.

February 5, 1952

Dear Sheffield

It was good to get your last letter. I always look forward to them. I'm glad to know that you are well. I know how you feel, I miss you too.

I suppose I'll begin with the last round of excitement. It's never a dull moment around here with Janet around. It's always something with that girl. The funny thing is that it's never really her fault, accidents just seem to find her. This one could have been serious.

On Saturday she drove Norma to work so she could have the car to go over to the church to play volleyball with the girls. She was heading down Grandin,

when a car pulled out in front of her at Sherwood Avenue. She hit the brakes but couldn't stop and hit the other car square on its front fender. The force of the impact caused her to hit her head on the steering wheel.

I got a call from the hospital telling me that she had been in an accident and to come immediately. Naturally I assumed the the worse. When I got there, they were stitching up a gash over her right eyebrow. In addition she had a mild concussion. She hadn't lost consciousness but was a little dazed and confused at first. When asked who they needed to call, she gave them Samantha's name and telephone number.

The police officers who responded to the scene said that the other driver, who thankfully also only had minor injuries, was cited for failure to yield and that from the looks of things, Janet was not at fault.

Their car was towed away and later deemed to have more damage than it was worth. I went and took a look, and the front end was all smashed up and the frame was twisted. So much for that car.

After a treating her and making sure she was alright, the hospital let her come home. We'll have to see what the other person's insurance will do about the car. They should pay the hospital bill too.

I brought her home and kept a close eye on her for the rest of the day and had her stay home from church on Sunday. Between meetings, Walt and Jack came over and administered to her.

She seemed to be doing alright and I was going to let her go back to school yesterday. Then about 6:00, Norma heard strange sounds coming from Janet's room. She went to see what was the mater and found Janet thrashing around in bed with blood and saliva drooling from her mouth.

She ran out to the top of the stairs and called down to me. I dashed up the stairs to see what was matter and when I went into her room, she was sitting up in bed with a dazed look on her face. She didn't seem to recognize me and tried to scream but couldn't because her tongue was swollen from biting it.

I knew immediately that she had had a seizure and had Norma call the hospital. By the time the ambulance arrived she was coherent and recognized her surroundings. She took her second ambulance ride in three days and I went with her.

Once at the hospital, the doctor confirmed what I had suspected. Seizures aren't all that uncommon when a person has suffered a head injury. The doctor attributed it to a direct result of the concussion she received in the accident and

wrote a prescription for Primidone.

He wants her to stay on it for a while just to make sure she doesn't have any repeat seizures so he can definitely rule out anything else, such as epilepsy. He also told her not to participate in track until further notice. As you can imagine, she didn't take that very well.

I brought her home and called the school to tell them that we had a medical emergency and that neither Janet or I would be there. Today we both went back to school and I was there to keep an eye on her. She seems to be doing just fine. I have to take her back to the doctor next Monday. In the meantime I'm keeping the bandage changed and the cut seems to be healing.

That pretty much over shadows any other news I have to pass along to you. The Magicians remain undefeated after a big win over Lynchburg. The calves are doing fine. There so fun to watch as they run and buck around the corral. Everyone in the family seems to be doing well, especially your mother. She still misses Emmett but is adjusting to being a widow. Norma was been going out with Wade at least once a week. As for me, I'm fine. Teaching your class and taking care of my own business keeps me busy.

This letter is getting kind of long. I'll close for now and in so doing, let me tell you how much I love you. Take care of yourself and stay safe and come home as soon as you can, at least for a visit. I look forward to hearing from you again.

Love, Ramona.

* * * * *

The episode about straightening the calf's head is from experiences I had as a kid on the farm with lambs that had the same problem.

"The Greatest Show on Earth" debuted on January 10, 1952 and at the the 25th Academy awards, won best picture.

The dam and power plant at Chosan are fictional as was the attack on it. However, this story is based on the attack of the dam and power plant at Sui-ho on June 23, 1952.