

## Chapter XLI

### Finding Colonel Douglas

July 3, 1952 – December 31, 1952

"It seems like we've been doing a lot of running around lately." Ramona said as she began packing on Thursday morning.

"Yeah, I know. I'd like to have a weekend at home again." Sheffield agreed.

"Thanks for taking me to see Harvey. I haven't been down to see him for quite a while. Are you sure you don't mind missing out on the Fourth of July with your family and the Austins?"

"No, that's alright. I promised that I'd take you and this seems to be the best time."

"The only thing I regret is that Craig has to leave and we could be spending this time with him."

"Yeah but we'll be back before he has to leave and besides he won't be that far away, he'll be able to come home from time to time."

"That's true, but not until at least the middle of August."

"This is everything, I want to take. While you finish packing, I'll go pull the Staggerwing out of the hangar and get it fueled up."

When Sheffield came back in, Ramona had their bags sitting by the door and Janet had hers ready too. Norma was going to spend the 4<sup>th</sup> with the Rowan's and wouldn't be going. Besides she had to go to work later in the day. Janet had asked for the entire weekend off so she go with them.

Sheffield took their luggage out to the plane and stowed it in the cubby behind the cabin. A few minutes later Ramona and the girls wandered out to the hangar. Ramona had some last minute instructions for Norma and gave her a hug. Janet and Sheffield each had a hug for her as well before boarding the plane. Once the cabin hatch was closed and everyone was situated, Sheffield started the engine and taxied into position. Norma waved through a cloud of dust as Sheffield throttled up. Within seconds the Staggerwing was in the air.

Around noon, they landed in Memphis, Tennessee, which was a little better than half way, to have some lunch and to top of the fuel tank so they could make it the rest of the way. By two o'clock they touched down at the Erhart Ranch. It was none to soon as a thunderstorm was moving in. Harvey and Joseph rushed out to greet them and brought in their luggage while Sheffield secured the aircraft.

By the time he had the plane secured and dashed into the house the first raindrops were splattering the ground. No sooner than he was on the porch, a bolt of lightning ripped the clouds open with a deafening boom and their contents spilled to the earth.

While rain pelted the windows, they visited and sipped on some lemonade that Marcella had made. Their kids had grown since the last time that Sheffield and Ramona had seen them. Harvey and Marcella's daughter, Winnie, was now seven. Joseph's children, Anna and Paul, were now five and three. Marcella

had pretty much been their mother ever since Ruth Ann left. Harvey said that having a young wife and a houseful of children kept him young. At forty one, Marcella was twelve years younger than him. At that, she was only eleven years older than Joseph.

Before long, Winnie, whisked Janet away to show her all of her dolls and naturally Anna had to show her hers too.

Anna and Paul were such adorable children, it was unthinkable that Ruth Ann could have just up and abandoned them like that. She had never tried to contact them, not even as much as to remember them on their birthdays. The only contact they had with her was a brief glimpse in the background of a movie now and then. Joseph explained that in the two years since Ruth Ann left that he had finally moved on and for the last three months he was seeing a woman with two of children of her own and that they would meet her tomorrow.

Eventually the thunderstorm moved across the river and into Oklahoma. The sun came out and cast an incredible double rainbow that arched from one end of the ranch to the other. They all had a good visit the rest of the afternoon and into the evening.

On Friday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Harvey hosted an old fashioned Texas barbecue. Ramona and Sheffield got to meet Joseph's girlfriend. She seemed like a lovely girl. Her name was Rhonda Fendman from just across the Red River in Colbert, Oklahoma. She was a couple of years younger than Joseph and had been married to a man who returned from the war in bad emotional shape. At first his problems weren't so evident but within a short time he started drinking heavily and became quite abusive. Eventually she had to take her children and leave him and returned to Colbert to live with her parents.

That evening they all attended a rodeo at the fair grounds in Sherman, the county seat, just south of Denison. Although not the highlight of the evening, Joseph participated in the calf roping event. When the rodeo was over at around eleven, the night was capped off with a pretty decent fireworks display.

On Saturday, Ramona wanted to go see her Grandma Lula, so Harvey took Ramona, Sheffield and Janet over to Durant. She had only seen Tallula once since she first found her eight years earlier. At that time, there was no real connection between them after all of the years that she had no contact with her. When she found her, she was surprised that she was even still alive.

Since then Ramona had tried to stay in touch, but Tallula rarely responded. The last time that Ramona had gone to see her, she was living in a nursing home in Durant and was suffering from advanced dementia.

They found the nursing home and went in. When Ramona inquired at the front desk, she was told that Tallula had died three months earlier. Ramona wasn't too surprised, after all she was eighty five years old and in poor health. The lady at the desk told her that she was buried in the tribal cemetery west of

town. She also told her that they had a box of her personal affects that they didn't know what to do with since she had no known relatives. They weren't aware of Ramona.

Ramona took the box and left. She had Harvey take her out to the burial grounds below the bluff. She started by going to the spot where her great grandparents, Tombi and Opah, were buried and began looking around. There, not too far away was a simple marker that said, Lula Douglas 1867 – 1952.

That evening, back at Harvey's home, Ramona went through the box which included a few odds and ends that weren't of much value, not even sentimental. But there were some real treasures in it as well. There was some jewelery and an envelope with some photographs and newspaper clippings.

The jewelery, of authentic Choctaw craftsmanship, included a sterling silver cuff bracelet and matching earrings. The bracelet was hand stamped with a mountain sunset design and a small, polished turquoise gemstone mounted in silver beading. The earrings had the same gemstone and silver beading. The Choctaw, being fastidious about their appearance, were long known for their fine jewelery. It was hard to say how old these were. Ramona was thrilled to have something of her Choctaw heritage. There was some beaded jewelry in the box as well.

From the envelope, Ramona found a host of treasures. The first thing she saw was a photograph that must have been taken around 1906. The photograph included herself at about three years old, her mother Poloma, her grandmother Tallula, her great grandmother Opah, and an older woman who appeared to be in her seventies or eighties. It was obviously her great great grandmother. Unfortunately there were no names written on the back.

The next photograph was of her beloved great grandfather Tombi in his ceremonial robe and headdress. There was a photo of Tallula and Colonel Douglas, her grandfather. Ramona had never known what he looked like. He was a rather short man but quite dashing in his cavalry uniform and waxed mustache. She never really knew anything about him, except that he was an Army officer assigned to the reservation. When his assignment was up, he retired from the Army and returned to his wife and family in the east, leaving her grandmother and mother to fend for themselves, although he did send money on a regular basis for a number of years until he died..

Next, she found a very old newspaper clipping from 1888 about Lieutenant Colonel William J. Douglas, the Army officer assigned to the Choctaw Reservation as the representative from the Office of Indian Affairs. According to the article, Colonel Douglas was the overseer of the tribe and was responsible for keeping the peace, among other administrative functions and had under his command a small cavalry detachment. The article stated that his post was being dissolved and he was retiring from the Army and returning to his hometown of Lancaster, Pennsylvania to be with his wife.

Ramona learned that at the beginning of the Civil War he had enlisted in the 1st Pennsylvania

Volunteer Cavalry of the Union Army, serving in Company L as a horse soldier. During the war he participated in the Battle of Cross Keys, the Battle of Cedar Mountain, the Second Battle of Bull Run, all in which the Union Army was defeated by the Confederates. Later he fought at the Battle of Antietam which was a strategic victory for the Union, and the Battle of Fredericksburg in Virginia which was yet another Confederate victory.

At the Battle of Gettysburg he received special commendation for outstanding courage and leadership under fire. His company had been ambushed and all of the officers and sergeants were either killed or incapacitated. As a corporal, he took charge and directed the fight in which the Rebels were routed from their positions and forced to retreat before the entire company was wiped out. For his actions, he was awarded a commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Pennsylvania Militia by the Governor.

At Gettysburg, the tide of the war turned and he was involved in countless raids, skirmishes, and battles and was present at Appomattox Court House when General Lee surrendered. At the conclusion of the war when the 1st Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry was discharged from federal service, he opted to sign on with the regular army and was allowed to keep the rank of Second Lieutenant. Following the war he served in various Indian campaigns and rose through the ranks to Lieutenant Colonel, which he held when he assumed his assignment with the Choctaw Nation in 1884.

Ramona finally knew a little more about her Grandfather Douglas, at least where he was from and his military career, and she now had a face to place with the name. As far as his personal life was concerned. She learned that his wife's name was Margaret and that they were the parents of four children, three daughters and one son. The article didn't mention anything about his relationship with Tallula or the halfbreed child that he had fathered through her.

The envelope contained a few other photographs of people that she had no idea who they were. The day had been far more productive than she could have imagined when they set out across the Red River that morning. Even though her Grandma Lula had passed away, she came away with a better understanding of the mystery man who had been her Grandfather Douglas.

On Sunday morning, it was time to go home. Once their luggage and Ramona's treasure box were aboard the Staggerwing, they said their goodbyes. On the return trip they took Anna and Paul with them to spend a few weeks with Ruth Ann's parents. Joseph kissed them goodbye and told them to be good for their Grandpa and Grandma Brason. The plan was that he would come and get them at Labor Day. On the trip home, Janet kept them entertained in the back seat with coloring books and crayons, played games, and read to them from a storybook. After a stop in Nashville for lunch and fuel, they were home by early afternoon.

Everything at home was in order. Craig had baled the hay and with the help of Edith, Norma, and

Wade had put it in the stack. There was enough time to get ready to go to Sacramento meeting where they handed off Anna and Paul to Shenan and Emily.

That afternoon in Sacramento meeting, the new Mission President and his wife were introduced. After five years, President Price was released and went home and was replaced by Claude W. Nalder and his wife Mable from San Francisco. During their time in the mission field the Prices had become an integral part of the branch and had made many close friends, including Sheffield and Ramona. Now everyone had the Nalders to get acquainted with.

On Monday morning, everyone saw Sheffield off as he took off to go back to Washington. Later in the morning, they saw Craig off at the train station as he had to report in for active duty that day. With him stationed in Norfolk, Edith had quit her job in Blacksburg and moved back in with Stirling and Mary Ann for the time being. During the middle of that week, Craig went to sea on the Crown Point while the pilots in his squadron participated in carrier qualifications.

Now that Sheffield's trials were over, he went to work on the next phase of his project, the test of an actual angled flight deck complete with reconfigured arresting gear. At the end of the week, he came home and was glad that there wasn't someplace to go.

However that Saturday, he did make it a point to attend a political rally. Presidential candidate and retired General Dwight D. Eisenhower was in Roanoke on a campaign stop prior to the Virginia primary election the following Tuesday. Sheffield had met Eisenhower when he was the Commander of Allied Forces in the Mediterranean in 1943 when he summoned Sheffield to his headquarters in Algiers.

The event was held at the Hotel Roanoke and Sheffield and Ramona went to give their support. Of all the candidates, both Republican and Democrat, with their eyes on the White House. Sheffield believed that he was the best and most qualified to manage the war in Korea and bring it to an end.

Sheffield chose to wear his uniform that evening and it certainly got Eisenhower's attention. As he was visiting with three or four people, he excused himself and made a beeline for him. With his hand out stretched as he approached, he said, "Well, well. If it isn't my old friend Sheffield Brason. It's good to see you again."

Sheffield shook his hand and responded, "It's good to see you again General, sir. I'm surprised you remembered me after nine years." He turned to Ramona and added, "This is my wife Ramona."

"I'm pleased to meet you Missus Brason." Then he said to Sheffield, "Now, remember what I told you then, my friends call me Ike, and I consider you one of my friends. I see you're still on active duty."

"Actually I retired after the war but was recalled to active duty."

Ike asked him about his assessment of the war and Sheffield didn't hesitate to tell him that he

thought that it was being mismanaged by the bureaucracy in Washington and offered his candid view as to what needed to be done.

Ike devoted his full attention as he listened intently to what Admiral Brason had to say. After spending a few minutes with him, he said, "Thank you Sheffield for your input and your support." as he shook his hand. "I take it I can count on your vote on Tuesday?"

"You already have it." Sheffield assured him. "I'll be in Washington on Tuesday so I voted by absentee ballot."

Ike thanked him again and went on to talk to other supporters and potential voters. Sheffield and Ramona took a seat when it came time to for his speech. Before leaving to go home, Sheffield let a five hundred dollar campaign contribution.

The following Monday, Craig sailed with the Crown Point for her shakedown cruise in the Caribbean and would be away for six weeks. He would be gone for his twenty first birthday on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August and miss Edith's birthday five days later.

The rest of the summer settled into a routine. Sheffield spent his weekdays at work and on the weekend he would come home. In early August he mowed the hay one Saturday and baled it and staked it the next. At work he and his staff were ready to go on to the next phase of their evaluation of the angled deck concept. But first he needed a carrier for the next part of the test. Since the Crown Point, which already had an angled deck extension was on her shakedown cruise and slated for further duty, the Navy pulled the Antietam out of reserve on the west coast and in August sent her to the New York Navy Yard by way of the Panama Canal. In the meantime Sheffield and his staff, with the assistance of a naval architect laid out the design changes. The Antietam was still in her original configuration, and had been placed in reserve after returning from her last deployment to Korea.

During the middle of August, Ramona came up to spend a few days with Sheffield before she had to go back to school. She arrived on a Wednesday and stayed with him at his apartment. He liked having her there when he came home from work in the evenings.

On Saturday she wanted to go up to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to see if she could learn any more about her Grandfather Douglas. He had been on her mind ever since returning from Denison. Lancaster was only a little over a hundred and twenty miles from Arlington. With an early start, they were there by ten o'clock.

She first wanted to go to cemetery and see if she could find his grave. There were a number of cemeteries in town so she started with the largest one, the Lancaster City Cemetery. Just inside the main gate was the sexton's office. It was closed but there was a sign with a cemetery directory. Sure enough, William and Margaret Douglas were listed and gave the location. The headstone wasn't too hard to find

once they found the right section of the cemetery. It was a large granite monument with Douglas inscribed across the top. Below the name and to the right it said Lieutenant Colonel William J. Douglas, United States Army, Retired. It listed his date of birth as November 27, 1839 and his death date as February 20, 1919.

“That was during the height of the enfluenza.” Ramona observed. “That would have made him seventy nine years old.”

“Now that you've found him, what do you want to do now?” Sheffield asked.

“I want you to take me to the pulic library so I can look in the newspaper archives to see if I can find his obituary.”

Not knowing where it was, they asked for directions. It wasn't hard to find as it was less than six blocks from the cemetery. They went in and told the librarian what they were looking for. She took them to a large cabinet full of drawers. After scanning the labels on the drawers, she opened one and said, “You should find what you're looking for in here.”

Ramona assumed that it would be in the edition for the following day and thumbed through them and pulled out the February 21, 1919 edition of the Intelligencer Journal and began thumbing through it. “Here it is.” she said as she turned to page three and four. “There, thats him.” she said as she pointed to his picture. She began reading, “Colonel William Jefferson Douglas of Lancaster died on Thursday February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1919 after a brief illness.” She paused and remaked, “See. I bet it was the enflunza. It goes on to say, 'He was born November twenty seventh, eighteen thirty nine in Lancaster, Pennsylvania to Sherman and Agnes Blithers Douglas.’” She paused and wrote down the information before continuing.

She learned that had married his wife in 1863 after the Battle of Gettysburg. The obituary included the details of his military career, which was what she had already learned from the clipping in her grandmother's box.

It went on to say that after returning form army that he served a number of years as the police commissioner in Lancaster until he retired in 1904. “Look here.” Ramona said. “It says here that he was a generous benefactor who was always helping people in need. That explains why he sent money to Grandma Lula all of those years.”

As she read on, she stopped to write the names of his surviving children, including the names of their spouses. “Do you suppose any of them are still alive?” she asked Sheffield.

“If any of them are, they'd be in their eighties or nineties by now.” Sheffield reasoned.

Ramona finished reading the obituary which said that funeral services were held on February 24<sup>th</sup> in the St. James Episcopal Church. “That must mean he was of English decent.” she guessed.

“So what are you going to do next?” Sheffield asked.

"I'm going to see if I can find any of his children the telephone book"

"What are you going to say? 'Hi, I'm the granddaughter of your father's Indian mistress.'"

"I'll try to be little more discrete than that." Ramona laughed.

Ramona took the names of her grandfather's children and their spouses and began looking for them in the telephone directory. She started with the oldest daughter, but didn't find anything. The same thing with the second daughter. His son's name was Steven Douglas, and there was three of them listed, so she wrote down their names, telephone numbers, and addresses. She did find the name of the third daughter's husband listed and she took down the information.

There was telephone booth just outside of the library so she sequestered herself inside and began her search. Of the three Steven Douglas', none of them were the one she was looking for. She was down to her last chance, the youngest daughter, and dialed the number.

"Hello." a pleasant voice answered.

"Hello. Is the Doris Kidd?"

"Yes."

"Hi. My name is Ramona Brason. Are you the daughter of Colonel William Douglas?"

"Why yes. I am."

Ramona was hesitant. "I don't quite know how to say this, but he is my grandfather." There was silence on the other end of the line so Ramona continued. "You see, when he was stationed in Oklahoma with the Choctaws he had a relationship with a young Indian girl who bore his child. That child was my mother."

"That explains a lot." Doris said. "After he died, we discovered that he had been sending money to a woman in Oklahoma. Not only that, we found a photograph of him with a young Indian woman and baby in with his personal papers. So all these years we assumed that he had an affair while out west."

"Would it be possible for me to come and see you? I'd like to learn more about him."

"That would be fine. Perhaps you could shed some light on this family mystery."

Doris gave Ramona directions to her home and few minutes later she and Sheffield were sitting in her living room. Her two older sisters had passed away and her brother lived in Philadelphia. Doris was seventy nine years old and a widow of three years.

Doris proceeded to tell her all about her father and the wonderful man that he was. "When his secret had come to light after his death, my mother and us kids were puzzled about the revelation. It was clear that something had happened while he was in Oklahoma." she explained. "But he had always been such a devoted husband and father that we chose not to let it diminish the way we felt about him."

She showed her the photograph and Raomna explained, "This is Colonel Douglas and Tallula, my

grandmother, and the baby is my mother. Her name was Poloma. She never knew him either. This newspaper clipping is all I know about him.” she said. “My family moved away when I was about six years old and I never saw or heard from my Grandma Lula again until eight years ago.

“She told me that as young girl she was assigned to be his housekeeper. After a while she moved into his home. She was only eighteen when my mother was born.”

“Goodness.” Doris sighed. “She was young enough to be his daughter. I was only eleven when he left to go to Oklahoma and sixteen when he came home from the Army. From the picture, she was pretty girl. Is she still alive?”

“No, I’m sorry to say. I only saw her one other time after that. I went to see her while I was visiting my cousin in Texas back in July and learned that she died in March. The nursing home where she lived gave me a box that included the photograph and the clipping.”

“Do you have any brothers or sisters?”

“Just a younger brother who died as a small child. My mother died several years ago as well, so it’s just me.”

“Well then.” Doris realized. “I guess this makes me your aunt.”

Doris spent the next hour telling Ramona all about him and she came away with a better understanding of her grandfather. She was able to look at the family bible and copied down the pedigree chart that was in it. She learned that the Douglas line had come from England to the colonies in the 1690s and his mother had come from England as young girl.

During their visit, Doris asked about Ramona and she gave a brief account of where her life had taken her. As she and Sheffield were ready to leave, Doris gave her the photograph that had puzzled the family for more than thirty years. “If you’re ever up this way again, be sure to stop in and see me.” She invited as she gave her new found niece a hug.

All the way back to Washington, Ramona couldn’t stop talking about what she had learned. “I always felt like an orphan until I met Harvey, and I wouldn’t have met him if it weren’t for you. Then all of sudden I discovered that I did have a family, but Colonel Douglas was the only missing piece. Now I feel complete. Granted, it’s not a close family like yours, but at least now I know where I came from.

“So let’s see. That makes me a quarter German through the Erhart line, a quarter Spaniard through Grandmother Erhart’s Villanueva line. A quarter Choctaw through Grandma Lula and a quarter English through Colonel Douglas. It looks like I have some more work to do the next time we can go to the temple.”

It was still fairly early in the evening when they returned to Sheffield’s apartment. On Sunday they attended the Arlington Ward with the Kirks and Moncurs. In visiting with them, Sheffield and Ramona invited them down to spend the upcoming Labor Day weekend. Then on Monday, she drove home to

Roanoke.

During the next couple of weeks Sheffield made a trip to New York to inspect the Antietam and to go over the plans with the Navy Yard and come home the following weekend. At the end of the second week, he gave his staff Friday through Tuesday off for Labor day and he flew home on Thursday after work.

In the meantime, Ramona got ready to go back to school. During the first week in August, she spent a day at school for teacher preparation. The following weekend, Quinn and Seth stayed for three days while they came to see Bonnie and Jolene. This was the third time they had come during the summer. They sailed with the Reprisal on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August for multi-national exercises in the North Atlantic and wouldn't be back until after the first of October.

Craig's ship returned to Norfolk after her shakedown cruise and he came home on Wednesday the 27<sup>th</sup> of August for a week. He stayed with Edith at her parents home so his room could be used as a guest room over the weekend.

On Friday, Sheffield and Ramona set about getting ready for their company on Saturday. On Friday afternoon, Harvey and Marcella flew up in his Bobcat. It was just an overnigher to get Anna and Paul.

On Saturday Dan and Daphne Kirk with their two children, five year old Spencer and two year old Carmen, were the first to arrive around noon. Phil and Anita and their four year old daughter Maureen showed up a couple of hours later. The last to arrive was Yeoman Walinsky who came down on the four o'clock train.

Yeoman Walinsky was an introverted young man who never had much to say. He was exceptional at what he did and paid meticulous attention to details. That evening, Wade and Norma were going out so she called a girl she new at Hollins who was much the same way and fixed them up for the evening. When they picked her up, they sat about as far apart in the backseat as possible without falling out of the car, while Norma snuggled in as close to Wade as she could without interfering in his ability to drive.

They went to the Grandin Theater to see "Monkey Business" starring Cary Grant, Ginger Rogers, Charles Coburn, and Marilyn Monroe. Yeoman Walinsky and his date warmed up to each other as they laughed through the movie.

Meanwhile, Janet watched their guests' children while the three couples enjoyed a nice soak in Ramona's bathhouses. (Sheffield had suggested that they bring their bathing suits.) The water was so relaxing that their guests really opened up and shared a lot about themselves.

Anita announced, "I can tell you now that I'm expecting."

Everyone expressed their congratulations.

"I've suspected it for a little while now but we didn't want to say anything until we knew for sure. I went to the doctor yesterday and he confirmed it."

"How far along are you?" Ramona asked

"About three months, give or take." Anita replied.

"Yeah," Phil added. "As near as we can tell, as soon as I got home for Korea in May, bam! she got pregnant."

"That happens a lot when a man gets home after being at sea for a long time." Sheffield said candidly. "I've seen it happen a lot over the years."

"It must be true." Daphne interjected. "I haven't been to the doctor yet, but I'm certain that I'm pregnant too."

There was another round of congratulations.

"There must be something to it, sir." Dan agreed. "Because no sooner than I got home and, well its like Phil said, 'Bam!'"

"Well," Ramona laughed, "When Sheffield got home, we went bam too but I can guarantee you that I'm not pregnant. I never have been and never will be. I had my kids the easy way, they came along when they were half grown. No messy diapers, no teething, no temper tantrums. I skipped all of that and went straight to teenagers. In the process, I missed out on all of the precious moments but hope to live them vicariously through my grandchildren, if Craig and Edith ever get on the ball."

"Craig, Norma, and Janet seem like such good kids." Daphne observed.

"They are. We couldn't ask for anything better." Ramona said. "They haven't given us one bit of trouble. I feel like the luckiest mom in the world to have them."

From there, the conversation went on to other things. After getting out, everyone was so relaxed that they just wanted to go to bed. Ramona gave the Kirks the guest room and put the Moncurs in Craig's bedroom. When Yeoman Walinsky came in, she put him on the couch in the living room.

On Sunday they took the Kirks and and Moncurs to church with them. Yeoman Walinsky, who had never been much of a church goer, went along as well. After Sunday School, Walt pulled Norma aside and extended a call to her to serve as the Sunday School pianist. She was happy to accept and was sustained in sacrament meeting that afternoon.

Monday, which was Labor Day, was a day of fun and games. Red and Roxie were saddled up for anyone who wanted to ride. Sheffield hosted a barbecue as in lieu of a formal staff appreciation banquet. Craig and Edith were there as were Norma and Wade, and of course Janet. They played games, a lot of horse shoes, and visited, and ate. In addition to steak, there was potato salad, corn on the cob from the garden, watermelon, and the like. There was cake and ice cream to boot. At one point during the afternoon,

Craig and Edith and Norma and Wade took advantage of Ramona's bathhouse. Later in the evening, they all sat out around the fire and told stories and visited until the stars came out. By then a chill settled in and drove everyone inside.

On Tuesday, their guests left and Craig had to leave as well to go back to Norfolk. Sheffield enjoyed the rest of the day with his family before going back to Washington the next day.

On Wednesday, Ramona and Janet went back to school. This was Janet's junior year and she was confident in her prospects of making the girls varsity track team after her car accident and subsequent seizure the previous year.

There was something new that year as well. The Church introduced early morning seminary for all students in the ninth through twelfth grades. In the areas where church membership was quite concentrated, they had held release time seminary for several years. During the previous school year there was a pilot program in California where early morning seminary was tried out. It had been a success and was now being implemented in other areas. The students from the branch met at the meetinghouse at seven a.m. for class, which was over in time to go to school. Jefferson High was two and half miles from the church. There were twenty five students in the class and Hyrum Fielding had been called to be the teacher and their course of study was the Book of Mormon.

Norma went back to school as well. This was her sophomore year at Hollins. With everyone going different directions, transportation became a little tricky, since Janet had to leave early for seminary and stay after school for track. And then their work schedules complicated matters even more. With Sheffield away during the week, Ramona resorted to driving his Roadmaster and let Norma take her Victoria so Janet could drive the old green Ford.

One by one they came home after the first day of school. Ramona had some business to attend to after her last class but was still the first one to come home. Norma worked a couple of hours at the music store and came home and spent another hour practicing the piano. Wade stopped in to see her on his way home from his first day at Roanoke College. Janet had track tryouts after school and wasn't scheduled to work at the BookEnd until later in the week. When she got home, she only spent a half an hour at the piano. She was beginning to lose interest and was thinking about quitting altogether. That evening over dinner, they all talked about their first day of school and the prospects for the year ahead. Before going to bed, Ramona, Norma and Janet had a relaxing soak in the bathhouse.

On Friday, Sheffield came home for the weekend. Everyone was excited to tell him all about going back to school. The last several weekends had one thing or another going on. This one however was a nice relaxing weekend.

And so it went all during the fall. Janet did make the track team. Norma convinced her not to give

up on the piano. She told her that she didn't have to be great to enjoy it. Both Norma and Janet spent about ten or twelve hours a week at their jobs. Ramona kept busy between her three government classes, looking in on Ellen from time to time and buying and selling houses.

As for Sheffield, he and his staff stayed on top of their project. Work on the Antietam's conversion began the second week in September. About once a week he went to New York to monitor the progress. He was able to come home every weekend. When he came home, his Saturday's kept him busy. One weekend in mid September he mowed and raked the hay and baled it the next.

The Reprisal had returned from the North Atlantic around the second week of October and naturally Quinn and Sedic came a couple of times and camped out in their guest room while they courted Bonnie and Jolene. Sedic and Jolene seemed to be getting pretty serious about one another. Ramona predicted that there would be wedding bells in the near future.

During September and October Craig was able to get a seventy hour pass to come home. Once Edith went to Norfolk to spend a weekend with him. On his visit home in October, He and Edith came over for dinner one Friday evening when Sheffield came home. They seemed to be particularly upbeat that evening as if they had something they were dying to share. If they did they didn't say anything right away.

Over Dinner Craig explained, "While the Crown Point is in the New York Navy Yard for post shakedown repairs, my squadron will be based at Norfolk until the first part of November when it moves to Alameda."

"So Edith," Ramona asked, "Are you planning on moving to California to be with him?"

"That was the plan." Edith responded. "But something has come up and I'll be staying here with my folks."

"Oh really. What changed your plans?"

"I'd like to stay here so my mother can help me through the next six months."

"Help with what?" Sheffield asked.

Craig couldn't keep it any longer. This was as close to the moment that he was looking for as he could get. He answered, "Yesterday when I got home and Edith met me at the train station, she told me that we're going to have a baby."

"A baby!" Ramona shrieked.

"Um huh." both Craig and Edith nodded.

"That's wonderful." Ramona said as she got up out of the chair to give them both a hug. "I'm going to be a grandma."

"Congratulations." Sheffield said. "That is good news. I'm excited for for you. Only one thing. I'm too young to be married to a grandma."

“Oh pooh!” Ramona quipped. “I certainly don't look like a grandma. But take a look at yourself, you already look like a grandpa.”

“I've just been practicing.”

Norma and Janet finally got to respond. They were excited to be aunts.

“So when are you due?” Ramona wanted to know.”

“Around the first of April.” Edith said. “That's why we think it best if I stay here now.”

The news was particularly exciting for Sheffield and Ramona at the prospect of their first grandchild. Ramona was especially thrilled; for the woman who thought she would never have children was about to be a grandmother.

During the middle of October, the Crown Point returned to Norfolk after her post shakedown repairs and began preparing for the move to Alameda. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November she sailed for Alameda and took Craig with her.

Since Sheffield spent his weekdays in Washington, he wasn't able to cast his ballot in the presidential election on election day, so earlier he had requested an absentee ballot so he could vote for his old army buddy, Ike. Ramona typically tended to vote for Democrats, but after having met Eisenhower in person and seeing the respect that he had for her husband, on election day she too voted for the Eisenhower/Nixon ticket. Sheffield stayed up late on election night to watch television alone in his apartment as the results come in. He was thrilled that Eisenhower won a decisive victory, winning over 55% of the popular vote and carrying 39 of the 48 states, including Virginia. Sheffield was now confident that maybe the stalemate in Korea would be resolved and the war would quickly be won.

The following weekend, Sheffield and Ramona attended an open house for Delbert and Connie on Saturday. The previous week they had flown to Salt Lake City accompanied Shenan and Emily and Connie's parents, Frank and Bertha Ray from Lynchburg to be married in the Salt Lake Temple. They had a more formal reception in Lynchburg the previous evening. He had been home on leave and had to return to Germany while Connie stayed in Lynchburg.

November passed quickly and soon it was Thanksgiving. Sheffield came home on Wednesday, the same day that school let out for the holiday. The Brason family gathered at the Two Star Ranch for the traditional feast. Not everyone was able to be there as some of the nieces and nephews went to their spouse's families. Craig was not able to come home and naturally Ruth Ann was absent. It was as if she had disappeared off the face of the earth. In addition to the family, the missionaries who were working with Wendalynn and Myrle were also there.

Sheffield spent the day after Thanksgiving putting up the outdoor Christmas lights. While he and Janet were stringing the lights, Ramona sat down to write out the Christmas cards. Any more that was

about the only contact they had with their old friends Freddy and Susan McGowan, Shorty and Wilma Short, Hank and Teri Terry, and others. Her Christmas card list included Morris and Sheila Gover, Wayne and Gail Gover, Debra and Chet Mayfield, John and Kathryn Godfrey, Ramona's newfound aunt Doris Kidd, and even Paula and Jacob Messner.

The following weekend they went up to the cabin to look for a Christmas tree and on Sunday Sheffield celebrated his fifty fourth birthday. It was a fairly simple event. The real excitement came the following weekend. Ramona and the girls skipped school on Friday and flew to New York to meet Sheffield. He was there for the final inception of the modifications to the Antietam which were just completed.

The purpose of the trip was to attend the premier showing of "Mediterranean Summer" at Loews Theater at Times Square on Friday the twelfth before its nationwide release the next day. At the same time, it premiered in Los Angeles as well. Since Sheffield's schedule wouldn't permit a trip to main event in Los Angeles, MGM flew the family to New York and put them up at the Times Square Hotel which was just a block from the theater.

Sheffield thought that they did an excellent job in portraying the battle off Salerno but felt they embellished the romance. Ramona on the other hand was delighted with how they developed their love story, especially how they included the fact that she had been in love with him for all that time but was unable to do anything about it. She really liked the way Anne Baxter portrayed her.

This was the first time the girls had ever been to New York City, so they spent Saturday seeing some of the sites, particularly Central Park. On Sunday they flew home. Sheffield went with them only as far as Washington.

When the work on the Antietam wrapped up at the end of the third week of December, Sheffield gave his staff the rest of the month off with orders to report back on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January. That afternoon, Sheffield flew home for the holidays. He got home on Friday in time to attend a wrestling match and cheer on the Magicians.

That Sunday was his week to teach the Elders Quorum. In sacrament meeting that afternoon, Ramona had a solo part during the choir's special Christmas program. On Monday he went to school with Ramona and sat in on her government classes. On Tuesday he went into town for one last Christmas gift he wanted to get for the family while Ramona and the girls were in school. Before coming home, he picked up Craig at the airport, who was able to come home for ten days. While he was home, Edith came to stay with him. She was five months along and was showing.

It was nice to have everyone home that year. On Christmas morning, Sheffield went out to barn and brought in the last minute gift that he had bought. Everyone was delighted with the RCA Console Television with a seventeen inch screen and ten inch speaker. The mahogany cabinet had large front doors

that swung open to expose the screen and controls.

Roanoke's first television station, WSLS-TV channel 10 where Tim worked went on the air earlier in the month. He had been involved with the station from its inception and had helped get it on the air. Just before going on the air, Horace Austin, Charlie's oldest son, joined the station's news team as the weatherman. He resigned his commission in the Navy after ten years to take the job and moved back to Roanoke.

The station went on the air December 11<sup>th</sup> and now they could enjoy the modern convenience that television afforded. Being the only station around, it carried programming from all three major networks: NBC, CBS and ABC. When Ellen came out for Christmas dinner, she was totally flabbergasted by such a contraption. She just couldn't understand how the moving picture appeared on the screen.

The week between Christmas and New Years was spent enjoying one another and the extended family. It was especially nice to have Craig home. Later in the week Quinn and Sedric showed up on their way back to Norfolk after going home on leave to spend New Years Eve with their girlfriends.

On New Years Eve Sheffield and Ramona reflected on the year as it came to a close. For Sheffield, the highlight was coming home from Korea to his assignment in Washington. First of all, it let him be close to home so he could commute back and forth and spend time at home. Secondly he was working on a project that he felt passionate about. He asked Ramona what the highlight of the year was.

Her response was, "I'd have to say that it was finding Colonel Douglas."

\* \* \* \* \*

For the background on Tallula and Ramona's Choctaw heritage see Remembering Geannie Chapter 21, The Business of War Chapter 25 and Chapter 37.

According to the January 1959 Relief Society Magazine, President Nalder actually arrived in the Central Atlantic States Mission in January 1952.

For Sheffield's encounter with General Eisenhower, see The Business of War Chapter 28.

Monkey Business actually debuted on September 2, 1952 about four days after Norma and Wade and their guests went to see it in the story.

The Antietam returned from Korea in April 1952 and rejoined the Pacific Reserve Fleet briefly. She was reactivated later that summer and in August, transited the Panama Canal to join the Atlantic Fleet. In September, the ship entered the New York Naval Shipyard for major alterations beginning on September 8<sup>th</sup> and concluded on December 16<sup>th</sup>. She emerged from the yard as the world's first carrier with a true angled flight deck, supported by rudimentary struts. The installation allowed for true angle deck tests, including arrested landings.

WSLS-TV channel 10 first signed on the air on December 11, 1952. It is the third-oldest continuously operating station in Virginia and the state's oldest station west of Richmond. It was owned by the Shenandoah Life Insurance Company along with WSLS radio. The call letters stand for Shenandoah Life Stations. The station originally carried programming from all three major networks: NBC, CBS and ABC.