

Chapter XLII

I Like Ike

January 1, 1953 – March 28, 1953

New Years Day 1953 was overcast with occasional rain showers, but with no real accumulation of precipitation. During the morning, the family gathered around the television to watch the Tournament of Roses Parade which was broadcast live from Pasadena, California. One could only imagine the rich, vibrant colors as the parade streamed across the television screen in black and white. The rest of week was spent relaxing and being together.

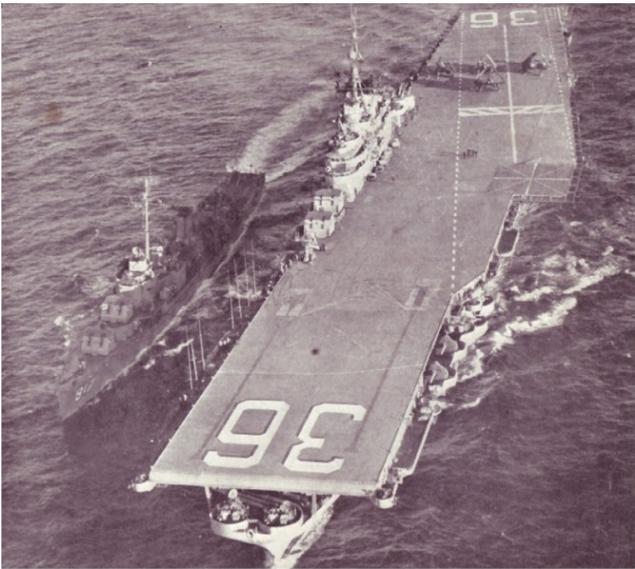
Quinn and Sedric spent New Year's Day with Bonnie and Jolene. The Brason's had become their home away from home and they came and went as they pleased. They hardly saw much of them as all of their time was spent with the girls. Sheffield and Ramona didn't mind having them stay with them. In fact they quite enjoyed them. Being a coach Sheffield naturally gravitated to young people and they to him.

On Saturday night, Craig and Edith, Norma and Wade, Sedric and Jolene, and Quinn and Bonnie took over the house, including Ramona's bathhouse, for a party. The four couples were all connected in one way or another. Craig and Edith had known Sedric at Ricks College. Wade and Jolene were brother and sister and Bonnie was their cousin. Quinn and Sedric were best friends and shipmates and they got to know Wade by attending the serviceman's branch in Tokyo when he was a missionary assigned to the branch. Since Janet went to a district MIA dance at the Roanoke Branch meetinghouse, Sheffield and Ramona went out to dinner and to see "April in Paris" at the Grandin Theater.

Sunday was the last full day at home for Sheffield but Craig had to leave to fly back to Alameda that morning. Naturally the day was spent attending their church meetings and Wade joined them for Sunday dinner, while Quinn and Sedric were at the respective Rowan families. That night, the two sailors rode the train back to Norfolk so they could report in by eight o'clock.

After breakfast on Monday morning, Sheffield said goodbye and flew back to Washington. With the long winter nights, it was light enough for him to take off from his unlit landing strip a little after seven. Flying along the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains, he was almost to Charlottesville when the sun came up at seven thirty four. He and his staff resumed work on the upcoming trial aboard the Antietam the following week. After he left that morning, Ramona and the girls went back to school and life settled back into a routine. That routine, included Sheffield coming home again on Friday afternoon for the weekend.

When he left again the following Monday, he flew his Staggerwing directly to Norfolk where his staff was waiting for him. The Antietam was ready to sail and got underway once his flag was struck on the foremast. The carrier escorted by the destroyer Corry steamed out of Chesapeake Bay into the choppy waters of the Atlantic Ocean under a threatening sky off the Virginia Capes. The only aircraft aboard were an SNJ Texan and a helicopter for plane guard duty.



Sheffield climbed into backseat of the trainer, with Commander Kirk at the controls. Admiral Brason wanted to test it out himself first before the trials began. The plane took off over the bow without catapult assistance and came around and made a low level pass over the landing area, without touching the deck. Then they made two or three touch and go passes before making an arrested landing on the angled deck. He climbed out of the plane and made his way up to PryFly and gave the order for the trials to commence.

The same squadron from the Naval Aircraft Test Center from Patuxent River Naval Air Station that had participated in the previous trials were loitering nearby and formed up in the landing circle and began coming in. One by one the planes made touch and go landings and circled around for another pass. After several passes, the first plane to actually land was an FJ-2 Fury, a navalized version of the Air Force's F-86 Sabre.

After being disengaged from the arresting cable, the Fury taxied forward and parked as it would in normal flight operations. One after another the planes landed and taxied forward, leaving the angled landing area free for the next plane on approach. Including the FJ-2 Furys, six different aircraft types participated in the trials, representing those in service with the fleet at the time. Four were jets; FJ-2 Furys, F9F-6 Panthers, F9F-8 Cougars, and F2H-3 Banshees. The other two types were the piston engined F4U-4 Corsairs and AD-5 Skyraiders.

Over the next four days a number of scenarios were tested as the planes were launched only to come around to land again. Some planes landed aboard while others were being launched. With the forward flight deck crowded with parked planes, the propeller aircraft were able to take off unassisted from the angled deck. There were even tests of night operations. Satisfied that they had accomplished all of their objectives, on Thursday afternoon Admiral Brason ordered the Antietam and Corry to return to Norfolk.

With Commander Kirk, Lieutenant Moncur and Yeoman Walinsky as passengers in his Staggerwing, Sheffield flew back to Washington on Thursday afternoon to begin the process of evaluating the results of the trials. They began the next day by reviewing the film footage that had been shot during the four days.

When Sheffield returned home on Friday afternoon, Janet ran from the barn across the yard to greet him. As he emerged from the cabin of the Staggerwing, without even saying hello, she excitedly told

him that the first calf of the season had just been born.

Sheffield grabbed his duffel bag and together they walked toward the house. He dropped his bag on the porch and went out to the barn with Janet to have a look. Blacker than night, the calf was already on his feet, sucking his mother's teat.

From the barn, they went into the house. Ramona greeted him at the door with a hug and kiss, "How was the trip home, Babe?" She asked.

"I ran into a little turbulence between Culpeper and Ruckersvill, but other than that, not bad."

"Well, its good to have you home. What do you think of the new calf?"

"He's a handsome one, for sure. It never ceases to amaze me how resilient they are."

"Why don't you go change and wash up while I finish up here. Norma should be home soon and we can have supper."

"It smells good. What are we having?"

"Stroganoff."

While Ramona put the finishing touches on dinner, Sheffield took his duffel bag and went into to bedroom and changed out of his uniform, put his things away, and washed up. When he returned to the kitchen, Norma still wasn't home and everything was on warm, just waiting for her.

So how did the trials go?"

"Very well. We still have a lot to review before we can take the next step."

"Oh and what will that be?"

"An actual operational deployment sometime in the spring, if all goes well."

"How was the cruise?"

"Nice and short. Out and back in four days and home to you. Any more thats just how I like them. How did your first week back at school after the holidays go?"

"Pretty good. We picked up right where we left off. Next week, I want to deviate from the schedule just a little and talk about the inauguration."

"How would you like to give a first hand report? I have tickets for seats on the Inaugural Platform to observe swearing in. Granted its a few rows back, but its a lot closer than most people will get."

"Really? That would be terrific. I'd have to get a substitute but that shouldn't be hard."

"What about you Janet, can you afford to miss a couple of days of school?"

"Really. I can come too?"

Just then Norma came in. "Go where?" she asked.

"To the inauguration." Janet said excitedly.

"Can you afford to miss a couple of days of school?" Sheffield asked.

“For something like this, by all means. Its not every day you get to witness history being made in person.”

“How did you manage to get the tickets?” Ramona quizzed.

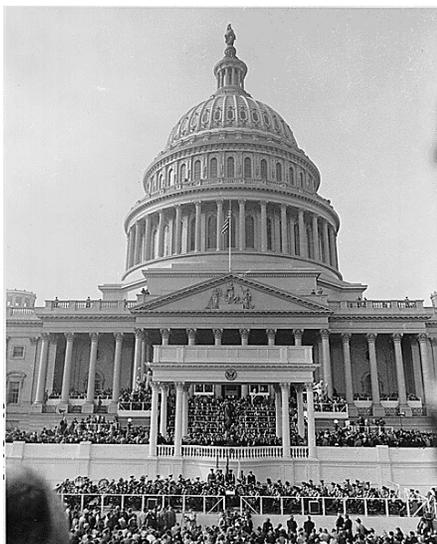
“I received a call from the inauguration committee yesterday morning. I guess they had me on their list not only as flag officer stationed in Washington but as a donor to Ike's campaign. They asked me how many tickets I needed and I told them that I could use four. By afternoon they were delivered to my office.

Over supper, making plans for a trip to Washington was the main topic of conversation. As the evening progressed, it all fell into place. With a couple of telephone calls Ramona had a substitute teacher lined up. They would stay in Sheffield's apartment. The girls would have to share the double bed in the spare room that came furnished with the apartment.

On Saturday, Sheffield got a round to taking down the outdoor Christmas lights, with help from Norma, and put them away for another year. Later in the day, Walt and Sarah stopped out for a visit. Then on Sunday, they attended church together. That was Sheffield's week to teach the lesson in the Elders Quorum.

Sheffield flew back to Washington on Monday morning and that afternoon, Ramona and the girls drove up in Sheffield's Roadmaster, which proudly displayed an “I Like Ike” bumper sticker. It was around seven by the time they got there and rather than having dinner ready and waiting, Sheffield treated them to dinner out.

Tuesday, January 20th was not only Inauguration Day, but more importantly it was Janet's seventeenth birthday and in the hurry to get ready for the day, that fact was not overlooked. Later in the morning, they took a cab to the Capitol Building, rather than trying to find a place to park. With tens of thousands of people in town, the traffic was horrendous as the taxi made its way to the Capitol Building.



They arrived an hour before the ceremony was to start and the platform was already filling up with a host of senior military officers, senators, congressmen, and other government officials. Sheffield's family was directed to a block of four seats on seventh row back, one of them right on the isle. Sheffield let the girls and Ramona in first and took the outside seat. While they waited, they listened to the Marine Corps Band. A large part of the sky was free of clouds. There was some haze, but the sun shown through, reflecting off the musicians instruments. There was enough of a breeze to unfurl the flags that proudly waved all around. Their vividness gave brightness to the drama under the Capitol dome. With the temperature in the mid to

upper forties, it was definitely a day to wear a coat.

Those seated on the stand stood as various dignitaries were introduced as they came out of the east entrance of the Capitol building. When former President Herbert Hoover was introduced, they knew that the time was getting close. Next to be introduced were President and Mrs. Truman as they stepped onto the platform and were ushered to their seats. And finally the, announcement that everyone had been waiting for, President Elect and Mrs. Eisenhower.

With the Eisenhowers on the platform, the ceremony began with the invocation which was offered by the Archbishop of Washington followed by the National Anthem performed by Dorothy Maynor, accompanied by the United States Marine Band. Miss Maynor, a soprano opera singer, made history by being the first colored person to sing at a Presidential Inauguration.

First, Senator Richard Nixon of California was sworn in as the Vice President. At the age of forty, he was the second youngest vice president in history. Only John C. Breckinridge, vice president to James Buchanan from 1857 to 1861 was younger when he was sworn in at the age of thirty six.

Next was another musical selection, "America, the Beautiful" performed by Eugene Conley, a celebrated American operatic tenor, who was also accompanied by the United States Marine Band and then a prayer offered by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver of Cleveland, Ohio.

By this time, it was twelve thirty one. According to the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, the terms of the President and Vice President end at noon on the 20th day of January. That meant the nation had gone thirty one minutes without a president. The sound of Flourishes from the trumpet section of the Marine Band signaled that it was time for General Eisenhower to take the oath and assume his leadership of the United States and its 158 million citizens.

Being in an aisle seat, Sheffield had a good view as Eisenhower stepped forward to take the oath of office. The girls had a good view as well, but Ramona had to crane her neck in order to see. Sheffield had changed seats with her so she could see better. He kicked himself for not being sensitive enough to let her have the aisle seat in the first place.

General Eisenhower took his place on the left side of the rostrum on the pillared stand and Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson faced him on the other side. Two Bibles were brought forward, one was the Bible used by George Washington in 1789, opened to II Chronicles 7:14; and his own personal "West Point Bible," opened to Psalms 33:12. Psalms 33:12 reads, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

He placed his left hand on the Bibles and with his right hand raised to the square, he repeated the oath of office as specified in the constitution. "I Dwight D. Eisenhower, do solemnly swear . . . that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States . . . and will, to the best of my ability, preserve,

protect and defend the Constitution of the United States . . . So help me God."

After shaking hands with former President Truman, President Eisenhower crossed the platform to Mrs. Eisenhower to give her a kiss, and then returned to the rostrum. He raised his arms in the familiar V salute of his campaign days. Then he adjusted his horn-rimmed glasses and began to speak.

The words that came were not those expected by the reporters in the press section below. All of them had texts of his inaugural address, and were prepared to hear him start reading it. Instead, he started out by saying, "I have a little prayer of my own, and I want you all to bow your heads."

He had written it a little earlier in his suite at the Hotel Statler, between the time he returned from church and the time he left for the White House to join Mr. Truman for the ride to the Capitol.

There was complete silence in the great concourse of people as the Chief Executive read his "little prayer."

"Give us, we pray," he intoned, "the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our works and actions to be governed thereby and by the laws of this land."

Having finished his prayer, President Eisenhower launched into his Inaugural address. His twenty minute speech was interrupted by applause five times.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the benediction was offered at twelve fifty five by Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

President and Mrs. Eisenhower were the first to leave the platform. As they made their way up the isle, they shook hands with those extending their congratulations. He paused just a moment to visit with Sheffield as he had many others. After shaking his hand, Sheffield saluted his Commander in Chief and said, "Congratulations Mr. President."

"Thank you Sheffield. Instead of congratulating me, you'd better wish me luck."

"I have every confidence in you, sir. I've seen what you are capable of."

"Well, thank you Admiral. I appreciate your confidence. And I know I can count on you to do your part."

After speaking with Sheffield, he shook hands with Ramona and the girls. Janet couldn't believe that she actually shook hands with the President of the United States. Did she ever have a story to tell when she went back to school. It was an experience that she would never forget. Neither would Norma for that matter. It was definitely worth missing school over, even if it did mean having to make up the work.

President and Mrs. Eisenhower continued up the isle until they disappeared into the capitol building. They were followed by the rest of the dignitaries, each shaking hands as they went. Truman shook their hands without comment. However, former President Hoover, paused just a moment as if he recognized Sheffield.

Sheffield seized the moment while he had his hand. "You probably don't remember me but my father in law was the late Senator Charles Austin, a good friend of yours."

"Oh yes. I remember now. Your wife arranged for me to speak at a campaign rally for him. Too bad he lost the election, he would have made a fine US Senator."

Hoover looked at Ramona, not remembering her as the woman he had met all those years ago.

Sheffield explained, "My wife was killed at Pearl Harbor. This Ramona, my current wife, and our daughters Norma and Janet.

The former president shook their hands and said, "I'm pleased to meet all of you."

Sheffield and his family waited until all of the dignitaries had left the platform before leaving themselves. The problem was, everyone else had the same idea: find something to eat before the parade. They found a crowded coffee shop on the way to the parade.

After lunch, they hurried to the location of the grandstand where Sheffield had paid ten dollars a seat. Somewhere between 750,000 and one million people lined Pennsylvania Avenue, the route from the Capitol Building to the White House. Sheffield felt it would be better to be closer to the Capitol where the parade began.

Leading the ten mile long procession was the new President, standing in an open Lincoln, waving at the throngs along either side of the street. Following his entourage of Secret Service agents were about 22,000 service men and women and 5,000 civilians in the parade, which included fifty floats representing various states and organizations, each illustrating scenes from Eisenhower's life. There were also 65 musical units, 350 horses, 3 elephants; the mascot of the Republican Party, an Alaskan dog team, and the 280-millimeter atomic cannon. It was the most elaborate inaugural pageant ever held and went on for four hours and thirty nine minutes.

By the time the last of the parade had passed their location, the sun had set and dusk was settling in.

Sheffield's uniform attracted the attention of a cab driver that heeded his hail and whisked them out of the city and across the river to his apartment in Arlington.

The Kirks and Moncurs, who had watched the proceedings on television, wanted to all about what they saw. They actually had some advantages of watching on television, even if it was void of color. For one thing, they were inside where it was warm. They saw one spectacle that the Brasons had missed. While watching from the presidential review stand in front of the White House, Montie Montana, a trick riding television cowboy, rode up to the stand on his horse and tossed his lasso around the president. It was obvious that he had consented to the stunt from how he allowed it to happen and the calm demeanor of his security detail.

Sheffield predicted, "Now that Ike is in the White House, the war will be over in six months. When it is, I'll retire from the Navy for good."

Dan and Phil both indicated that they too wanted to return to civilian life as well. Then Phil and Anita repeated their desire to settle in Roanoke. There wasn't anything for them in Kansas any more.

Since the activities of the day had overshadowed Janet's birthday, Anita had made her a birthday cake. With some ice cream thrown in, they had an impromptu birthday party for her. Janet was satisfied with the day. After all, none of her friends nor anyone else at Jefferson High School got to witness the inauguration in person, let alone shake hands with the President of the United States. While celebrating Janet's birthday, Sheffield and Ramona's eighth anniversary, which was in two days, was also included.

On Wednesday morning, Phil chauffeured Sheffield to work. Ramona and the girls saw him off and finished getting ready for the drive back to Roanoke. When they returned to school on Thursday, they had quite a story to tell. In the meantime, Sheffield and his staff worked on their report of the trails aboard the Antietam and began formulating the next step in their project. At the end of the week, Sheffield flew home in his Stagewing on Friday. That evening they celebrated their anniversary a day late by going out to dinner and movie: "The Mississippi Gambler" starring Tyrone Power.

On Saturday, Sheffield took stock of the four calves born during the week. That evening, they attended the baptismal service for Wendalynn and Myrle Karns. That left Ruth Ann the only member of the Brason family not to have joined the church.

When Sheffield returned to work on Monday, he and his staff finished their report and submitted their recommendation that a carrier be provided to be refit with a permanent angled deck for an operational trial. In the meantime, the air group that was to deploy with it could be training from the Antietam. With their recommendation submitted, they proceeded to work on a test plan for such a deployment. During the first week of February, they received word that Reprisal had been made available for conversion. She was smaller and if the operational trial proved unsuccessful, they navy would not have sacrificed one of their valuable Essex class carries. As it was, the Antietam had been relegated to being a test and training ship. Sheffield knew the Reprisal like the the back of his hand. He knew that she was up to the challenge and would prove herself.

He thought maybe they would give him the Crown Point, since she already had a temporary angled extension to her flight deck. But she was in the Pacific, working up and training her crew and air group for a deployment to Korea in the summer. When she sailed off to the war, she would take Craig with her. No time was wasted, the Reprisal went immediately to the Norfolk Navy Yard for modifications, which were estimated to take six weeks. Sheffield and his team had a hand in the design. The angled landing area was

to be much like the one added to the Antietam. From the trials on the Antietam, it was learned that fewer arresting cables were needed and that was incorporated. Also the angled extension would have a stronger, enclosed sponson as a support structure. The gun mounts along the edge of the flight deck would be removed to reduce weight, thus reducing her defensive capabilities. As an afterthought, provision was made for a small triangular extension just forward of the outboard elevator was made to alleviate the abrupt drop off. Other than the visual changes, additional ballast was added to the starboard side to balance the additional weight. There was one personal request from Admiral Brason; when the flight deck markings were reapplied he asked that the letters R P S L be included.

During February and March while the Reprisal was in the yard, Sheffield made frequent trips to Norfolk to monitor the progress. Naturally he came home on the weekends each week. When he could, he would attend the Magicians wrestling matches.

During that time, Sheffield gave both Phil and Dan each a week off when their wives had their babies. Phil and Anita had a baby boy in February who they named Peter Sheffield, his middle name was in honor of Admiral Brason. And then a week later, Dan and Daphne had a baby girl who they named Vanessa.

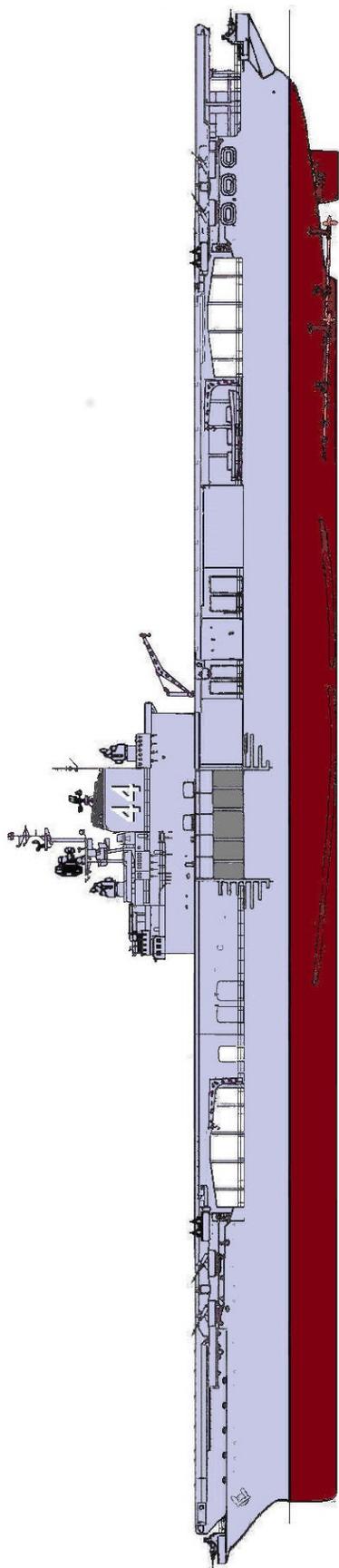
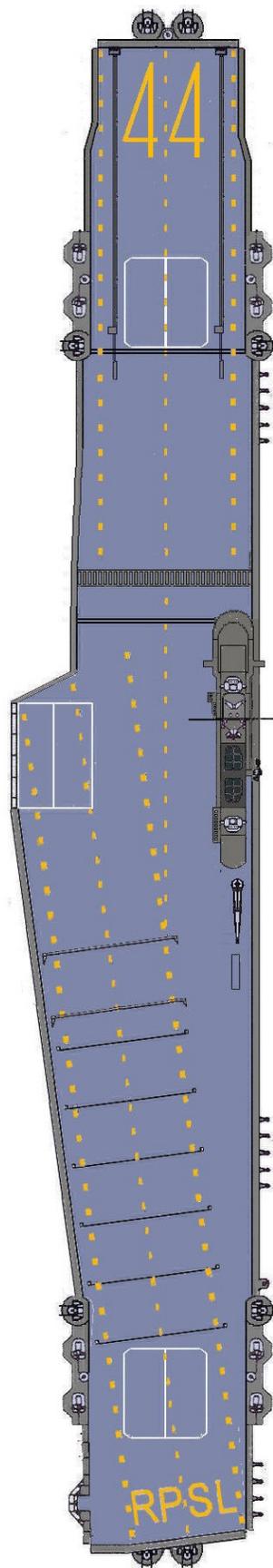
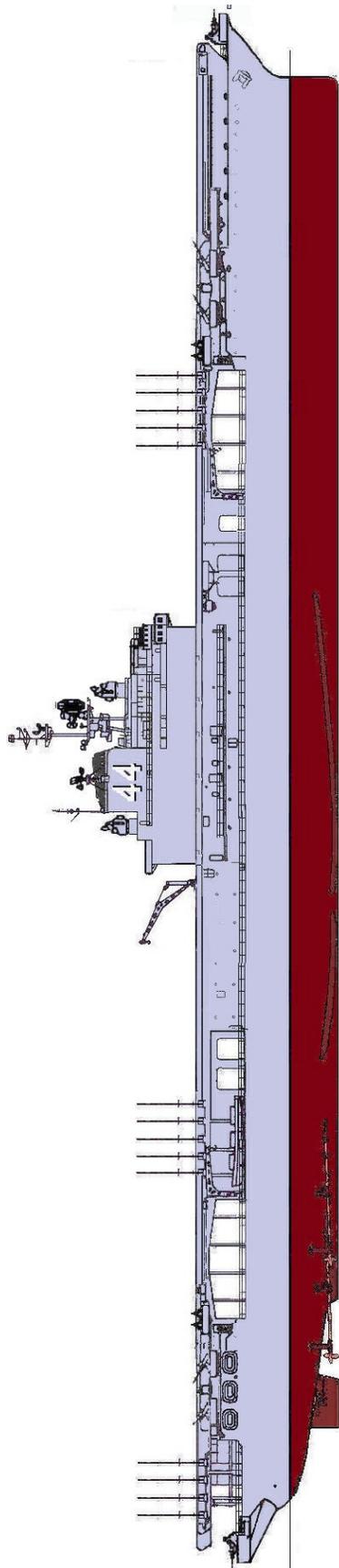
With the Reprisal the yard being refitted, the crew was given two week leaves. Quinn and Sedric spent a couple of weekends at the Two Star Ranch to see Bonnie and Jolene. On their two week leave, they stopped by overnight, long enough to pick up their girlfriends to take them home to meet their families.

Edith missed Craig while he was in California but they stayed in touch through the mail and the expense of an occasional long distance telephone call. Her pregnancy was going well with only four weeks until her due date. With his ship not scheduled to deploy until the summer, he had arranged to come for two weeks around the time the baby was to be born.

Sheffield and Ramona were excited to be grandparents and looked forward to it with great eagerness, especially Ramona. Stirling and Edith already had eleven grandchildren, so their excitement was more routine.

On the second weekend in March, Sheffield came home early on Friday to attend the district wrestling tournament held at Jefferson High School. Coach Karrington and the Magicians had just concluded a respectable season with more wins than loses. After the two day tournament, they were going to Richmond for the state championships in two weeks.

During the week, Sheffield made one last trip to Norfolk. The modifications to the Reprisal were complete and she left the yard for sea trials in the Chesapeake bay with Sheffield along for the ride. The added weight was evenly distributed, keeping her on an even keel. To test the arresting gear, a number of Corsairs came aboard. The cables held and performed as expected. She was ready to sail on schedule.



The annual Two Star Ranch Round Up was the third Saturday in March. It wasn't a very big deal in comparison to a real ranch, but it was a big deal at the Two Star Ranch. Sheffield missed it the year before while he was deployed to Korea. This year Craig wasn't there. As always, the Rowans came to help. Roger brought Wade and Read. Really, if it weren't for them there wouldn't be much accomplished. Sheffield, Ramona and the girls helped, but mainly tried to stay out of the way. Especially Janet, she didn't want to lose another toe.

The Rowans brought their own horses, while Sheffield was mounted on Red and Norma on Roxie. Ramona and Janet worked the gates. Red and Roxie always seemed to know what to do better than their riders. Harvey had trained them well. Red was now eleven years old and Roxie was twelve. They were in the prime of their lives and had many, many more good years ahead of them.

Once the calves were separated from their mothers, they were branded with the Two Star brand and the bull calves were castrated. The heifers and steers from the previous year were then sorted. Those that were going to the livestock auction were cut out of the small herd and put into a temporary holding pen. The one that was going into the deep freeze and one for the Branch fund raiser auction were isolated and left in the corral next to the barn. They would be taken to be butchered later. Two heifers were held back for breeding stock, while the two oldest cows were put in with the ones destined for the auction.

When the work was done and everyone had cleaned up, a hearty meal of fried chicken and potato salad was served. When Ramona and Janet were no longer needed to work the gates, they went into the house to fix dinner. After dinner, Roger and Sheffield hauled the truck load of cattle to the stockyard in Cloverdale, just past Hollins, while Read took their horses back to their ranch. Naturally, Wade lingered behind to spend some time with Norma. After unloading the cattle, Roger dropped Sheffield off on his way home. To unwind after a hard days work, Sheffield, Ramona, the girls and Wade had a nice relaxing soak in Ramona's bathhouses.

Since Ike took office, the peace talks with North Korea began to break down. President Eisenhower began to publicly hint that the United States might make use of its nuclear arsenal to break the military stalemate in Korea. Playing it both ways, Eisenhower was unafraid of criticism from within his own party and made substantial concessions to the Communists. The President also put pressure on South Korea to drop some of their demands in order to speed the peace process.

With the progress being made, Sheffield was confident that his prediction would come true. So sure that in his mind, he planned on teaching government and coaching the Magicians in the fall when school started.

After the sea trials, the Reprisal spent three days at sea conducting carrier qualifications with her air group, which had been training aboard the Antietam. Everything was on scheduled for sailing on April 6th to

the Mediterranean for a four month deployment. Admiral Brason was to fly his flag from her foremast one more time. The cruise was to be over in late July, which fit in well with Sheffield's secret agenda. He liked the idea.

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The Tournament of Roses Parade was broadcast nation wide for the first time the year before in 1952 after live coast-to-coast TV network lines had been installed.

April in Paris, starring Doris Day, was released on December 24, 1952

The tests of the angled deck on the Antietam occurred from January 12 – 15, 1953 off the Virginia Capes with the aircraft mentioned. For video of the test see http://imageevent.com/okbueno/mopic;jsessionid=kzmxqq9an2.eagle_s?p=68&n=1&m=-1&c=10&l=0&w=4&s=0&z=2

The information on President Eisenhower's inauguration came from a newspaper article in the January 21, 1953 Wshington Post by Edward T. Folliard.