

Chapter X

Natural Born Leader

July 8, 1956 – December 25, 1956

Sheffield and Ramona were asked to come and meet with President Henry A. Smith, the Mission President, before Sacrament Meeting on Sunday the 8th of July. President Smith replaced President Nalder who died suddenly almost a year earlier. He was from Salt Lake and had been the manager of the Deseret News Church Section.

Sheffield and Ramona entered his office and sat down across from him, wondering what it was all about. After visiting for a moment or two, President Smith got right to the point. "Brother Brason," he began, "I'm sure that from your vantage point in the branch presidency that you know all too well the issues associated with how large the branch has become."

"Yes I am. For one thing, it's difficult to keep track of everyone and secondly keeping them busy."

"Well, we're about to fix that. We are going to divide the branch and create a Salem Branch. It won't be a fifty-fifty split, but more like forty-sixty giving the new branch about two hundred and fifty members. The Roanoke Branch will be bigger, at least for now. The new branch will basically be everything west and north of Highway Two Twenty, except for what's inside the Roanoke city limits. The west boundary will be where it is now and will extend to the northern boundary of Craig County down to Rocky Mount and along the Pigg River on the south, as it does now.

"Now as you know, President Brown has served as the branch president for going on six years this fall. He has been informed that he will be released in two weeks. Your name, Brother Brason, has been submitted to and approved by the First Presidency to serve as the president of the Salem Branch. Under their direction, I extend the call to serve to you. Do you accept this calling?"

Sheffield was dumbfounded as he had not seen this coming. "I don't mean to question your inspiration, but do you have the right Brason. Isn't my brother Walt the one you want?"

"No, I'm certain, it's you."

"I'm not making excuses here, but I'm not sure I have what it takes."

"Certainly you do." President Smith assured him. "You are a natural born leader. That is all that you have done all of your life. Think of yourself as being the commanding officer or the coach. You do have experience in those areas, don't you."

"Yes, sir. But this is different."

"Not really. So let me ask you again. Will you accept the call?"

"Yes sir, I will. I hope you will forgive me questioning, but I had to sort through in my mind what you were asking me."

"Very well, then." He turned to Ramona and asked, "Sister Brason will you support your husband in

this calling?"

"Absolutely."

"Now Brother Brason, I need for you to prayerfully select your counselors and a clerk and get their names to President Barber, the district president, as quickly as possible so he can get them approved and passed on to me so I can get them called. We would like to take care of this in two weeks on the twenty second since next Sunday is district conference. An announcement of the pending changes will be made at that time. That will give everyone a week to speculate, but you can't say anything of this to anyone. I'm sure you have a lot of questions."

"Well, for starters where will we meet?"

"Both branches will continue to use the meetinghouse on Grandin. Arrangements will naturally have to be worked out with the new president of the Roanoke Branch. We anticipate having the new leadership for both branches called by next week. At that time you can meet to work out the details. Then you and your counselors can begin considering staffing issues, but don't issue any callings until you have been sustained and set apart. Here's a map of the boundaries for you and a complete list of who will be members of the Salem Branch. If you any questions or concerns call me, and I'll be looking forward to getting those names."

Sheffield left the office overwhelmed. As he sat on the stand during sacrament meeting, he looked over the congregation, sorting out who would be in his branch. It included the Rowans and several of the other families who were the first to join the church. It didn't include either of his brothers and none of the Austins except for Ray and Celia. Craig and Norma and their little families were included, but Janet was not. It also included the Moncurs. Needless to say, Sheffield was so preoccupied that he didn't get a thing out of the meeting.

Afterwards, the kids all came over for desert Sheffield tried to be engaging but had a lot on his mind. After an hour or so they went home and Ellen went to bed. Sheffield was tense so Ramona lead him out to the bathhouse for a good long relaxing soak. They talked about what was about to happen and what it meant for Sheffield, for the family, and for the branch. By the time they got out to went to bed, Sheffield was much more relaxed. As they said their prayer together, Sheffield asked for guidance and direction in how to proceed.

On Monday, Sheffield took to the sky in the Staggerwing where he did his best thinking. Being up there had a way of clearing his head and he could see things more clearly. He flew over the area that would make up the branch. From that prospective, he had a bigger picture of the lay of the land. He saw US Highway 220 as in wound its way south of Roanoke and where it made a right turn north of the city and cross the county line near the Carvin Creek Dam.

After getting a feel for the boundaries, he began locating the homes of the those who would be

members of the branch. He pictured them in his mind and recalled what he knew about them. He found it interesting how he received insights about them that he had not know. He spent several hours just loitering over the area, pondering the task at hand. As he did, he began to formulate some ideas.

When he landed back at the ranch, Sheffield had three names on his mind. The first one came to him fairly quickly. That was Phil Moncur, who he wanted for is clerk. Phil was a meticulous record keeper and they had a history of serving together and he trusted Phil completely. There was no question there.

The other two men on his mind were Nathan Little, who was married to Roger Rowan's sister, Bernice; and Leonard Brown who was Jack's younger brother. He wanted to look both men in the eye before submitting their names.

Leonard was easy. The next day Sheffield found an excuse to go into the feed and supply store west of Salem that he and Jack operated. He spotted Leonard as soon as he walked into the store and went out of his way to run into him. They had a casual conversation over a sack of oats for the horses, during which Sheffield looked him square in the eye and got insight into his heart. Leonard was definitely one of the men that he was looking for, he just didn't know which position to recommend him for.

Finding Nathan wasn't as easy. Nathan worked for the power company as a foreman over the linemen and his work took him all over the valley and it was hard to say were he might be at any given time. He was almost home from the feed store when he got a definite impression to go out to see Norma.

"I wonder what that's all about?" Sheffield wondered. "I hope nothing is wrong."

When he came to Electric Road, just three quarters of a mile from home, he turned right and headed out to South County. All the way he was wondering why he was going to see Norma and how he would explain the purpose of his visit.

He was even more confused when he got there because neither Norma or Wade were home. As he was backing out of the driveway he noticed a power company pickup in Roger's barnyard. It had to be Nathan, so Sheffield drove over and pulled in to find Nathan and Roger visiting over the hood of the Nathan's pickup.

Before Sheffield could get out of his pickup, Roger called out. "Well hello Sheffield, what brings you out this way."

"I came to see Norma, but no one was home. I saw you over here so I decided to stop in and say hello."

Sheffield got out and joined the conversation. They talked about a number of things from the weather to hoping that Eisenhower got re-elected in the fall. After a while, Roger had to go about his way, but Nathan lingered to visit with Sheffield before he had to leave. He happened to have been out in the area to inspect a job that one of his crews had just finished and stopped in to shoot the breeze with Roger before heading to

the next job. In that brief one on one conversation, Sheffield also got to look him in the eye and was also given insight into his heart. He too was the man that he was looking for.

On his way home, he marveled at how he had been prompted to go see Norma, but ended up finding Nathan instead. It was no coincidence, he was receiving the guidance and direction that he had asked for. That evening and the next day he pondered the placing of these two men. Both had long established roots in the branch and had comparable backgrounds when it came to serving in the church and both men were approaching their fiftieth birthdays. Sheffield actually felt a little intimidated by them because of their experience and knowledge as compared to his mere nine years in the church. Then it occurred to him that is exactly why he had been impressed to consider them. As he compared them to each other and to himself, he realized that together the three of them possessed the right combination of the talents and abilities needed.

After having three days to think it through, He called President Barber to recommend Nathan Little as his first counselor, Leonard Brown as his second counselor, and Philip Moncur as his clerk.

President Barber assured him, "Those are excellent choices. We'll get them approved tonight by the district council and passed on to President Smith."

The rest of the week was spent pondering and reflecting on what had got him to that point. He knew that Ramona was proud of him and was very supportive. Somehow he knew that Geannie was too. It caused him to wonder if there was anyone who he had offended or if he had any issues that he needed to make right with God before undertaking such a calling. He spent a lot of time on his knees, but his more fervent prayers were uttered at the controls of the Staggerwing. He logged as much flight time that week as he would on one of those cross country flights to Idaho. That was also where answers and direction came more clearly.

On Sunday at district conference, it was announced that the following week the Roanoke branch would be divided and new leadership would be sustained. Following the meeting, speculation ran rampant and several people expressed their opinions as to how it would be and who the new branch presidents would be. Most of them were way off. When asked what he thought, Sheffield tried act as if he didn't know and responded that it really didn't matter to him. He said that however it worked our would be the way that it should be.

That afternoon, one by one he received telephone calls from Nathan, Leonard, and Phil each telling him that they had accepted the call. Sheffield wasted no time in inviting them to his home that evening to begin figuring things out. Their first priority was to begin identifying key positions and who might fill them. The change would occur the next week and the new branch would begin meeting the week after that.

They met again in the middle of the week for further consideration. And then on Sunday they met

with Hyrum Fielding, who was to be the president of the Roanoke Branch with his presidency to work out the use of the building so their meetings could overlap.

During that next week, two classrooms were converted into office space for the new branch and furnished with furniture and equipment. Several boxes from Salt Lake showed up on Sheffield's doorstep containing lesson manuals and other material. He and his presidency meet again that week and finalized their decisions on the branch leadership so they would be ready to begin issuing calls once they had been sustained and set apart.

Sunday July 22nd was the big day. That morning during priesthood meeting and Sunday School, speculation and rumors were widespread as to what would take place that afternoon in Sacrament Meeting. Of all the names batted around, one or two people had mentioned Sheffield as a possible branch president among the host of other names. As far as the boundaries went, they were all over the map.

That afternoon at dinner, Sheffield was allowed to tell his immediate family that he was going to be one of the new branch presidents. None of them seemed too surprised and were excited for him at the opportunity.

"I'd rather have your faith and prayers than your excitement." Sheffield told them. "I need them."

Sacrament Meeting began as usual, with Sheffield sitting on the stand with the branch presidency. Also on the stand was President Smith who was presiding, along with President Barber and his counselors in the district presidency. President Brown, who was conducting the meeting for the last time, began meeting in the customary manner and after the sacrament had been blessed and passed, he turned to meeting over to President Smith to conduct the business at hand.

"This is a historic day for the Church in the Roanoke Valley." He began. "About sixty years ago the first missionaries arrived and began teaching the restored gospel. Over the next little while, the Rowan, Furness, Brown, and Gordon families were baptized, forming the core of the Roanoke Branch. Now, some of those original converts are still with us along with their posterity. In the sixty years since then many, many more of you have joined the church or moved into the area forming this vast congregation here today. The Roanoke Branch is by far the largest branch in the Central Atlantic States Mission, in either Virginia or North Carolina. It is because of the vastness of this congregation that we are here to conduct the business of this this solemn occasion.

"First, it is proposed that we extend an honorable release to Jack L. Brown as President of the Roanoke Branch, Sheffield Brason as First Counselor, Elmer C. Peterson as Second Counselor, and Wyatt G. Rumsey as Branch Clerk. All who can join me in expressing their appreciation for a their dedication and service, Please manifest it by raising your right hand.

"Now, for what you have all been wondering about. I will explain the new boundaries of the Roanoke

and Salem Branches. While I am doing so, members of the district council will pass out a map to each family. On the back are the meeting times for each branch.” He paused momentarily while six men entered chapel. As they walked up and down the aisles passing out the maps, President Smith explained the boundaries and went over the meeting times.

“These are the boundaries which have been submitted to and approved by the First Presidency. It is proposed that these boundaries, as explained, be sustained. All in favor, please manifest it by raising your right hand.”

As well as could be determined, every hand was raised.

“If there be any opposed, please manifest it by the same sign.”

Not one hand went up.

President Smith continued, “In a moment, I will present the names of the new branch presidencies for a sustaining vote. Just a word about that. The sustaining of officers is more than a mere ritual that we go through. First it is the way by which the Lord's chosen servants are made known to the members of the Church that you may know that they are duly authorized.

“Second it is a covenant process. We as members of the church raise our hands to the square as sign that we not only covenant to accept them as the Lord's chosen servants, but also that we covenant that we will respond to the calls to service and counsel that they in turn extend to us.

“Now that you have had the boundaries explained to you and have had time to look at the map, I'm sure everyone has figured out which branch you are in. Will all of those in the Roanoke Branch please stand.” He paused while a little more than half of the congregation stood up. Then he continued, “It is proposed that we sustain Hyrum C. Fielding as President of the Roanoke Branch, with Stirling B. Austin as First Counselor, John E. Furness as Second Counselor, and Joseph M. Brason as Branch Clerk. All of you who can sustain these brethren, please manifest it.” President Smith paused to look over the congregation, then proceeded, “Any opposed by the same sign.” Again he paused, but not one hand went up. “Thank you. Please be seated.

“Now, for those of you who are members of the new Salem Branch, will you please stand.” He paused to allow the others stand before continuing. “It is proposed that we sustain Sheffield Brason as Branch President, with Nathan W. Little as First Counselor, Leonard A. Brown as Second Counselor, and Phillip Y. Moncur as Branch Clerk. All in favor, please manifest it.” ... “Any opposed?”

“Thank you. It appears that the voting on these proposals have been unanimous in the affirmative. Now will these brethren please join us on the stand; the Roanoke Branch to my right and the Salem Branch to my left. While they are coming forward, let me just say that what we have done here today will become a regular occurrence as you continue to grow. You may have noticed that the Roanoke Branch remains the

larger of the two. That was by design. In the next little while and over the next several years, more branches will be created and one day in fifteen or twenty years, these branches will become wards as a Stake of Zion will be created here among you.

“Now we will be pleased to hear from President Brown. He will be followed by President Fielding and President Brason will be our concluding speaker.” President Smith sat down as President Brown took the podium.

“Concluding speaker?” Sheffield said to himself. “I hadn't figured on this.” He tuned out what was being said and began searching his mind as what to say. Nothing came. Then he realized that he was searching the wrong place, he needed to be searching his heart.

Sooner than he was ready, it was his turn. Sheffield stood and walked over to the podium. He stood there momentarily and scanned over the faces in the congregation, noting those to whom his remarks would be addressed. Then he looked directly at Ramona who was surrounded by Craig, Norma, their families, Janet, and his mother. He took a deep breath and sent a silent prayer heavenward.

“Brothers and Sisters of the Salem Branch. I'm sure all of you were surprised if not shocked when you heard my name read. I can assure you that you weren't as shocked as I was when this call was extended to me. My first reaction was, 'I think you mean my brother, Walt don't you?' Over the last couple of weeks I have thought a lot about the example that he and my father before him set. Although they were ministers in the Methodist Church, I observed how they went about ministering to the needs of people whether they be spiritual or physical. I hope to emulate the pattern that they have shown me.

“As most of you know, I was career naval officer. During the war and more recently in Korea, I found myself in command of men, ships, and planes. It was my responsibility to order men out on missions that took death and destruction to the enemy. Way too many times, it meant the deaths of the men who carried out my orders. In expressing my feelings of inadequacy to President Smith, he suggested that I liken this calling to being in command. I had to twist it around to make the idea fit but here's what I came up with.

“Instead of sending men out to spread death and destruction, I will be sending you out to spread life and salvation as you serve faithfully in the callings that we extend to you. Hopefully all of you will lose your lives in the process for as the Savior said, 'he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' .

“We need you, all of you, to staff the branch but it is going to take two or three weeks to get organized. Until then we will be calling on you to fill in by giving lessons or taking charge until then.”

Sheffield went on to express his appreciation for his membership in the Church and the blessing that it has been in his life. He expressed his love to his family. And finally he concluded his testimony.

When the meeting was over, the families of those to be set apart remained. First the Roanoke

Branch Presidency were set apart and then the Salem Branch Presidency. Sheffield was set apart by President Smith.

During the week Sheffield and his presidency began issuing calls for the key positions and lined up people to cover all of the bases on the first Sunday that they met as a branch. Over the next month, everything was organized and seemed to be working well. Everyone in the branch had something to do, with a some people having more than one calling.

Ramona got to remain as the choir director with the added responsibility of the branch music chairman. Craig became the Elders Quorum instructor and Edith was called as the Relief Society secretary. As for Wade and Norma, Wade was the first counselor in the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association and Norma was called as the branch organist. (She had learned to play the organ as well while at Hollins.) As for Janet, she continued to teach the the ten and eleven year old Bluebird girls in the Roanoke Branch.

By then it was almost time for Sheffield and Ramona to return to their classrooms. During the middle last week of August, they made good on their promise to take advantage of the cabin. Wade was able to get away from the ranch for a couple of days, but Craig could only come up in the evenings. Hiking back to the lake, bonfires and weenier roasts was the perfect way to close out the summer. Everyone from Ellen down to Geoffrey and Teresa had an enjoyable time, except for when Janet got stung by a yellow jacket. The only thing left of summer was the Labor Day picnic.

School started up again on the 5th of September. Sheffield's class sizes were down considerably since many of the students had transferred to Cave Spring High School. The pool of potential wrestling team members was also reduced. Some of the best wrestlers from the year before also ended up at Cave Spring, including Kyle Bunnell who was in Sheffield's priest quorum. All of the youth the branch either attended Cave Spring or Andrew Lewis High School in Salem, with a few of them at Jefferson.

Janet was enjoying being at Hollins and the arrangement with her roommates. She was enrolled in Ramona's health class, just because. She had written to Jerry on his mission and had recieved a prompt reply. He made no mention of any feelings that he might have for her. It was as if they were back to being pen pals. She was still heartbroken, but her roommates were trying to convince her to forget him and make herself available on the dating scene. She agreed and decided to go to an upcoming district M Men and Gleaner dance to let the guys know that she was back.

Sheffield and Ramona received a letter from Takara. She had had a wonderful summer. She was invited to accompany the Morleys on their week long vacation to Kauai. She was enjoying her job at the college and told of all the new things that had taken place since she last wrote. The thing she talked about the most was Teancum. She was obviously completely smitten by him.

It didn't take long for Sheffield to become involved with the challenges and trials that people were dealing with. He told Ramona, "When I was a counselor to Jack, I knew more about people than I cared to know. But now, I'm in over my head."

"Just trust in the Lord and let the Spirit be your guide." she counseled. "Just be careful not to internalize their problems and make them your problems."

That was about the best advice he could receive. He was dealing with a man who was battling a problem with alcohol that was tearing his family apart. He had served in the war and had been introduced to it then. Once he returned home, he straightened up, but now nearly eleven years later, with a wife and three kids, he had started drinking again. At first it was just a little, but now it had gotten out of hand. It was more than Sheffield knew how to handle, so he referred him to Walt for professional counseling.

Another issue he was dealing with was a young mother with four children all under the age of ten. She had been a nineteen year old war bride who married a returning soldier. He was older and had served a mission before going into the Army. When he returned, he was ready to get married and settle down. Now all of these years later, she felt that she had been cheated out of those years and had gotten involved in an extramarital affair. Her husband was trying to keep the family together, but she was on the verge of leaving her husband and her children.

Then there were the health issues and illnesses that many were going through, his own mother was among them. Ellen was also among a number of widows that he had charge of. Some of them were older like her, but there were also some younger war widows from either of the last two wars.

Others had financial difficulties; some because of bad breaks and others from poor choices. One man couldn't seem to hold a job. When he got one, he would up and quit after only a few weeks. He insisted that he wanted to be in business for himself. The problem was he went through business schemes almost as fast as he did jobs. His wife loved him dearly but was on the verge of taking the children and leaving him.

And then there were those dealing with struggling or wayward teenagers. But it wasn't all struggles and challenges. He witnessed miracles occurring in peoples lives because of their faithfulness despite their challenges. He saw people who were working hard to overcome mistakes or serious sins. So many of the members were faithful and obedient in all they did and reaped the blessing of the peace that gospel brings.

As the branch president, he learned early on to listen to the Spirit. He would get promptings to go and see someone without knowing why, only to find their need once he got there. Sometimes these came on his way home from work, sometimes while having dinner or whatever. Once he even got up off the stand during sacrament meeting and went to find someone.

Ramona knew not to ask where he was going or where had been. She knew when he had a lot on his mind and tried to help him relax. The bathhouse was a great place to relax and unwind but the place he

turned to the most when he needed to sort things out and get direction was the Staggerwing. Flying always had been and ever would be medicine to his soul.

Sheffield knew most of the members of the branch after having served in the presidency. There were a few that he didn't know very well, if at all. Sometimes he would take Ramona and go visiting, other times he took one or the other, or both of his counselors as he called on people.

There was on man who he didn't know who lived up in the hills down in Franklin County. No one had seen him in years. He lived all alone and was getting close to eighty years old. Sheffield felt strongly that he needed to go meet Dallas McIntosh and took Nathan with him, since he knew him and where he lived. He was actually Nathan's wife's uncle. He had been married to Henry Rowan's sister, Fern, and was among the first to join the church. They never did have any children and after a number of years, Fern died and Dallas blamed God and became angry and withdrawn and moved up into the hills and built a cabin.

He didn't have a telephone so they couldn't call ahead. They drove up into the hills on the chance that they could find him at home. Chances were pretty good that they would since it had been reported that never ventured far from his cabin except to check on his traps. He only came down every couple of months for supplies.

When they pulled into his yard, they were met by a fiercely barking dog. Sheffield didn't let the dog deter him and got out of the car and made his way up to the front porch. Chickens wandered around the yard which was strewn with empty moonshine jugs.

They knocked on the door and a gruff voice from inside barked, "Go away."

"Uncle Dallas." Nathan called out. "It's Nathan Little. Remember me? I'm married to Henry's daughter, Bernice."

A moment later a grizzled old man who looked even more gruff than he sounded appeared on the other side of the screen door. "So you're a Rowan." he said as he looked him over from under his bushy eyebrows. "I recollect seeing you before. But who's this here feller with ya'll?"

"My name is Sheffield Brason."

Nathan explained, "He's the branch president."

"Ya'll mean from the church?"

"That's right Uncle Dallas, and I'm one of his counselors."

"Yeah, what do you want?" Dallas snarled

"We just wanted to talk to you" Sheffield answered.

"Church men, eh? I reckon I ought to let you in lest the good Lord strike me down and I ain't ready to go meet my Fern yet."

Dallas opened the door and lead them into the cluttered cabin. "Sit yourselves down right there at

that there table and I'll be right with you.”

Dallas disappeared into another room and reappeared with holstered pistol with the gun belt wrapped around it. He sat down and placed it on the table between him and his visitors. “Now,” he said, “What do ya'll want to talk about?”

“We just wanted to see how you're doing and if you need anything.” Sheffield said calmly. Then he nodded toward the pistol, “Thats a fine looking forty four you've got there.”

“What does a church man know about guns.”

“I used to pack a piece when I was in the military. It was a Colt forty five semiautomatic. I still have it.”

“Where you in the army.”

“Nope. I was a navy pilot and during they war I was the captain of a ship and later an admiral.”

“Ya'll don't say. Could you hit anything with it?”

“I have a few marksmanship medals.”

“Did ya ever kill anyone with it?”

“No but I packed it in case if I ever found myself behind enemy lines, I could have if I needed to. What about you? Have you ever killed anyone.”

“Naw, but I sure scared the hell out of some revenue agents who came snooping around. They ain't never came back. Say, where's my hospitality, would you fellers like a snort?”

“No thank you.” Sheffield replied.

“Oh yeah, I almost forgot. You're church men. To tell you the truth, I haven't touched the stuff for six months now, ever since Fern came to me in a dream and told me to get ready for her to come and get me. Its funny that you came to see me. I've been wondering what to do so that when she comes, I'll be ready.”

“We can help you with that, if you're willing.”

With tears in his eyes, Dallas said, “I am, but isn't too late for me?”

“Its never too late.” Sheffield said and then he began to explain how he could help. When he was done he had Dallas convinced to come down out of the mountains to the valley and start coming back to church.

With fall setting on, Dallas obliged as he dreaded facing another winter in the hills. Sheffield told him to get his things together and they'd be back for him in one week.

As they drove back down into valley, Sheffield didn't have a clue what to do with him. Then miracles began happening. First they found a small house that was for rent. Sheffield rented it in the name of the church. On Sunday he addressed the Elders Quorum and explained that there was a need for money to pay the rent with. Commitments were made and enough was pledged to meet the obligation. Most of it came from the Rowan clan. Next furniture, appliances and household items were gathered.

One week later, Sheffield and Nathan returned for Dallas in Sheffield's pickup. He had a few things gathered and walked out to the pickup and tossed them into the back and told his dog to get in. As they rode down the mountain, it became obvious that the first thing he needed was good bath.

They got Dallas cleaned up and some new clothes; his old ones were incinerated. The Relief Society president brought him some groceries and someone else took him to the doctor. Dallas had become a project the whole branch took on. The Elders Quorum got involved, as did the Young Men, all looking after his needs.

After getting him settled and cleaned up, he came to church for the first time in nearly fifty years and the branch missionaries began teaching him. He had forget most everything, but he did remember what the Spirit felt like and he began to respond, especially to the outpouring of love.

Sheffield balanced his new responsibilities with his family, his government class and his wrestling team. The Magicians got off to good start with their season. Sheffield had a quandary when they had their first match against the Cave Spring Knights. At first he worried about how Kyle might feel about having his branch president coaching the wrestler he would go up against. Would he think that he was out crush him? These kinds of thoughts ran through his mind and he worried over it. Ramona reminded him that as long as fair sportsmanship was observed, there wouldn't be a problem. She told him that he was worrying needlessly. There was no reason why he couldn't cheer for both Kyle and the Magician that he went up against. "After all," she said, "he was on your team last year and was friends with those who were now his opponents. Their just opponents, not enemies. Friends compete against each other all the time."

Sheffield had to agree with her reasoning. All of his military training and combat experience had given him a skewed outlook and approach to competition. He came to realize what he already knew, even though they wore a different uniform, thy were no different than the boys on his team. As it turned out, Kyle won his match with a combination of his own natural talent and the skills that Sheffield had taught him as his coach.

Janet did go to that dance with her friends and had a wonderful time and was asked to dance by several young men. In the days that followed she begin receiving telephone calls and was asked out on dates. When she saw that other young men were interested in her, she began to forget about Jerry. She wrote to him and told him about all of the guys that were calling on her. When he wrote back, rather than expressing a hint of jealousy, he actually encouraged her to go out with them. Reading between the lines he seemed to be saying that he was free to go about his work.

She relished in her new found popularity and dated several young men who were competing for her affection. She rarely went out with the same guy twice in a row. One of these young men happened to be

Jerry Furness, Olivia's older brother. Janet had known Jerry for a long time since she had gone over to the Furness' on numerous occasions. As she grew up, he paid very little attention to her, after all she was just one of his kid sister's friends. Now all of a sudden, he was paying attention and stepped up his game to attract her attention.

Jerry was two years older than Janet and had graduated from high school in 1952. Since he had no plans to go to college, he was drafted into the army that summer. Although it was during the Korean War, he spent the entire time within the continental United States. He was discharged after two years and came home for a short time before serving a mission for the Church in the California Mission.

He had been home for a little while before Janet caught his eye and he asked her out. After about the third date, she began seeing him exclusively. Having been out of school for four years, he wasn't inclined to go any further and went to work in the family furniture store as a delivery driver for starters. The plan was for him to learn the business from the ground up over the next several years.

During the fall Wade got started on building a new house right next to their trailer. The plan was to get it framed and closed in before winter. He was doing most of the work himself with help from his father and Read. They hoped to have it ready to move into by spring. At which time, Read intended to purchase the trailer house. He had been slow to get serious and settle down but recently had been dating Kayla Richards and was getting serious with her and planned to ask her to marry him.

As October wrapped up, the presidential election was in full swing. It was a rematch of the 1952 election with President Eisenhower running against Adlai Stevenson. When the President made a swing through Roanoke, Sheffield went to listen to his old army buddy. As the General shook hands with the crowd, he went out of his way to greet Sheffield, who he still remembered. On election night, Sheffield and Ramona stayed up to watch television as the election results came in. In the end, Eisenhower was re-elected by winning forty one of the forty eight states.

Before long, the holidays were there, beginning with Thanksgiving. All of the kids and their families were there for Thanksgiving dinner, including Jerry Furness. Later in the day they each went to their in laws, and Janet went with Jerry to the Furnesses. The day after Thanksgiving they went up to the cabin to spend the night and get their Christmas trees. On Saturday outdoor Christmas lights went up and the Christmas tree was decorated by the end of the day.

Included in the holidays was Sheffield's fifty eighth birthday. That day also marked fifteen years that Geannie, Sandy, and Austin had been gone. As Sheffield and Ramona reminisced the events of that day, they couldn't believe that it had been fifteen years.

By the time that school let out for Christmas, the Magicians had racked up a respectable number of wins for the season thus far. The holidays were full of activities. Sheffield and his counselors took around

fruit baskets to the widows in the branch. There were a number of Christmas parties to attend, including one at the branch. As Sheffield had been accustomed to doing with his staff when he was in the military, he had his counselors and clerk and their wives over for dinner to show his appreciation for their dedication and hard work.

The grandkids brought the magic of Christmas to life. Little Geannie at three and half was so excited about Santa Claus and Rudolph and the baby Jesus. She went around singing, "Jing jing bell. Jing jing bell. Jing jing all way." Geoffrey and Teresa, who were eighteen months old, were particularly attracted to all the brightly wrapped packages under the tree on Christmas eve. They wanted to rip open anything and everything right on the spot. To satisfy their curiosity, everyone got to open one gift each. Sheffield let Geoffrey open his for him.

On Christmas morning, it was just Sheffield and Ramona, Ellen, and Janet, who had spent the night. They opened their gifts and then later in the afternoon when Craig and Norma and their families came for dinner, the little ones got to open the rest of their gifts.

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The information about President Henry A. Smith replacing President Nalder is factual
The organization of the Salem Branch at this time, the boundaries, and its composition are purely speculative.

The Story of Dallas McIntosh is a combination of a couple of men I once knew with some fiction thrown in.