

Chapter XV

Summer Road Trip

January 5, 1959 – May 30, 1960

When Sheffield went to school on Monday, his lesson material came right out of the news headlines. Over the weekend, the Territory of Alaska became the forty ninth state of the Union. He discussed with his classes the rules and the process for a territory to become a state. It was the first state to be admitted since 1912 when both Arizona and New Mexico became states.

At the same time, efforts were ongoing to make Hawaii the fiftieth state. That had Ramona's attention as she followed the developments closely. In Takara's letters, she had a lot to say about what was going on and how excited that she was for it to happen. She wouldn't be able to vote in the upcoming referendum, but she hoped to have her citizenship before the 1960 presidential election.

In mid January the cows began calving. The mixed Angus/Hereford calves were black with white markings on their faces. The hybrid combination was refereed to a Black Baldy. Each calf was unique with a slightly different pattern. Sheffield had been told that the Hereford cross would result in more docile cattle which were easier to handle and still have the physical characteristics of an Angus.

Raising cattle and having horses was more of hobby for Sheffield and a good way to put the land to use. A hobby that he enjoyed. He wasn't by any means a cowboy and never pretended to be. He and Ramona had one western outfit a piece that they wore on occasion.

Having worn a uniform all of his adult life, he was inclined to wear a suit and tie; always with a white shirt. To top it off, he wore a dress hat, as was the style for men. He preferred a fedora with a two to two and a half inch wide brim. That's how he dressed for his classroom, for church, and for going out. For working around the ranch he wore older clothes from his casual wardrobe, a pair of lace up work boots and and old fedora.

Now the Rowans, they were real cowboys. They were a dying breed in the east. Their ranch was being encroached upon by developers and it was hard to say how long they could hold out. In fact, Wade was thinking seriously of going back to school to become a veterinarian.

By the time of the round up in March, the Two Star heard leveled off at fifteen cows for breeding, and about as many calves, depending on the survival rate. He had enough pasture and alfalfa to maintain that many. Any more would be more than he could feasibly handle. In addition to cows, they had Red, Roxie, Admiral, and Blaze. As yearling, Blaze was still two years from being broke to ride. And then there were the chickens. They had a about fifteen hens and three roosters. The chickens started out as Janet's responsibility, but now they were Ramona's. These were laying hens and weren't very good meat chickens.

The Magicians had a good season that year. They finished the regular season with two wins for every loss. In fact, they won every home match. As with most seasons, this was a hard working bunch of

young men who gave their best effort. They won the district tournament and were the runner up at the state championships in Richmond. Two wrestlers placed first in their weight divisions.

Sheffield enjoyed working with the young men and helping them to see their potential and then seeing them rise to it. He had a way of interacting with them that earned their respect and they looked up to him as a role model. After all of the years of coaching, he had had countless young men on his team. He tried to keep track of them the best he could and most of them had gone on to be successful in their education and careers.

As Branch President, he had the same affect on the youth under his stewardship. In fact, the entire branch responded well to his leadership. He had a way of reaching out to people that made them feel appreciated and needed. He particularly had that ability with the recent converts and the inactive. He was able to reach the latter in ways that others couldn't.

He had his share of joy and heartbreak from his responsibility. He rejoiced as converts were baptized, and babies were born, and as couples were married. He performed many of the weddings as most couldn't make the trip out west to be married in one of the temples. Most of them saved and planned and eventually made the trip. For some, it took years to realize their goal.

He mourned with those who lost loved ones and officiated at funerals. For some, passing was a sweet occasion in culmination of long life. For others, the timing was tragic and a person was widowed and children lost a parent. It was particularly difficult when it was a child who was called home. Having lost Geannie and their three children, he could emphasize with them.

It was always heart wrenching when he had to discipline someone for transgression. On one occasion it was a man who was embezzling funds from his employer. The hardest to deal with were cases of promiscuity outside of wedlock and even worse, infidelity to one's spouse.

During the time since the Salem branch had been created, it continued to grow and had a healthy activity rate. The entire area continued to grow. A couple of years after the Salem Branch had been created, a branch in Bedford was created from the Roanoke and Lynchburg Branches.

During the early spring, Sheffield decided that it was time to trade in his his 1952 Buick Roadmaster. He had really liked that car and decided to get another Buick. He remembered how Geannie had loved her 1937 Buick convertible. He went back to the same dealer were he got his Roadmaster to have look. He really liked the fins on the new cars. They were even more pronounced than the year before. He thought it made them look as if they could almost fly.

After test driving the various models, he decided on a sky blue 1959 Buick Electra 225 four door hardtop that featured a wrap around rear window. The large canted rear tail fins was the car's most

distinguished feature. The front of end the car featured less dramatic fins over a pair of headlights arranged at the same angle.



Power windows and seat and leather interiors came standard on the Electra 225. Other Standard features

included a red-line speedometer, two-speed electric windshield wipers, trip mileage indicator, dual sunshades, step-on parking brake, dual horns, Twin-Turbine automatic transmission, Foamtex seat cushions, electric clock, trunk light, glovebox light, power steering, power brakes, and dual exhaust. This particular car also came with air conditioning.

As the school year drew to close, Sheffield and Ramona were discussing their summer plans one evening while relaxing in the bathhouse. In response to the question, Sheffield said, "You know. We don't have any weddings this year. There aren't any grandchildren being born. We don't have a reason to be any specific place at any given time. Do you want to know what I'm thinking?"

"Of course, Babe. I wouldn't have asked if I didn't want to know."

"Whenever we've gone somewhere, we've always flown. Don't get me wrong, flying is in my blood, but for once rather than look down as we fly over, I want to see things from the ground. I'm talking about a road trip. We've never actually been through the places that we've flown over."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Oh, I don't know. We need to go see Janet and Jerry. Where do you want to go?"

"I'd like to go see Harvey. We haven't been down to see him for a while."

"Why don't we make it a cross county road trip? I'm itching to take my new Buick for a good spin."

"That sounds like fun. How long do you figure it will take, Babe?"

"As long as we want. We don't have to be anywhere at a certain time. We'll just give Harvey and Janet a rough idea as to when we'll be there and call them from the road when we get close."

"That's not like you to not be on a schedule. You always want to have everything figured out."

"Not this time."

They went on to talk about where they might go and to make plans for the trip. It was a topic of conversation between them over the next several weeks.

School let out at the end of the third week in May. The following Saturday was Memorial Day and the Brason picnic and reunion. The next day, they attended church and Sheffield turned things over to his counselors until he got back.

On Monday, the 1st of June they set off. After getting the car loaded up, they headed out, but made

one stop on the way out of town. Since they were going to see Harvey anyway, they agreed to take Anna and Paul to spend the summer with their dad. With the kids aboard, they took their time as they headed southwest into Tennessee and then west as far as Nashville that first day and got motel room for the night.

Adhering to their no schedule policy, they stayed in Nashville two nights, giving them time look around. Being the home of the Grand Ole Opry, there was a lot to go and see it. Sheffield liked some country western music, particularly Jim Reeves and Patsy Cline. Like Ramona, he was more into Frank Sinatra and that genre of music. While in Nashville they also visited the Belle Meade Plantation and other Civil War sites.

As with the previous year and other years in the past, Ramona celebrated her fifty sixth birthday on the road. That day they only made it as far as Memphis. For dinner that night they took a two hour dinner cruise on the Mississippi River on a replica of an 1840s paddle wheeler.

On Thursday the 4th, they made it the rest of the way to Denison with plenty of day to spare. Joseph and Rhonda met them at Harvey's house and took Anna and Paul. At twelve and ten, they had been easy to take along and could enjoy the places that Sheffield and Ramona wanted to stop and see.

Since they missed Ramona's birthday by one day, Marcella had birthday cake ready and as promised, Harvey treated them to some Hereford rib eye stakes. Sheffield and Romona swore that they honestly couldn't tell difference between Angus and Hereford. Sheffield told him how his crossbred calves turned out and how they possessed the best of both breeds.

Even though Harvey was the one who had suggested that he try it. He wasn't willing to "corrupt" his Herefords by introducing them to Angus. He said that just like black people and white people, black cattle and red cattle should remain separate. Sheffield and Ramona took exception to his remark. The whole segregation/integration debate was was a hot topic across the country, especially in the south. Personally, Sheffield welcomed the possibility of integration.

That wasn't the only topic on which they disagreed, but Harvey was Ramona's only living relative and she didn't want to let differences of opinion come between them. Like Anna and Paul, Winifred was growing up too. She was now fourteen and was part lovely young lady and part tomboy.

They stayed Friday, Saturday, and Sunday with Harvey and Marcella and had a good time. One morning, they set out on horseback for a ride around the ranch. Another time, Harvey took them into Sherman. And of course, Ramona wanted to revisit the reservation where she was born.

When they left on Monday morning, all they knew was that they were heading for Utah, but didn't have a route planned out. That's when Ramona suggested, "You know, Babe, after visiting the reservation and reliving my young childhood, I'd like to see the country that we went through to get to Arizona."

"That sound's good to me." Sheffield said. "You're the navigator, plot me a course."

They set out along the Texas side of the Red River, through Wichita Falls and up into the Texas

Panhandle through Amarillo where they hooked up with the famous Route 66 and by mid afternoon they were coming into Tucumcari, New Mexico.

“This is about where my baby brother, Dennis, died and was buried.” Ramona said.

“Would you like to stop here for the day and have a look around? Its a little less than halfway.”

“Sure, I'd like that.”

Being six years old at the time, Ramona didn't recognize the area and had no idea where her brother was buried. But Tucumcari Mountain, south of town, did look familiar with its mesa top. They checked into the Blue Swallow Motel and found a diner and spent the rest of the afternoon and evening looking around the town. The town, as small as it was, was the largest between Amarillo and Albuquerque.

As they continued on the next day in the comfort of an air conditioned automobile, Ramona commented, “I remember vividly walking beside our wagon through this desolate country in the heat of July as a six year old girl. The wagon was loaded with all of our earthy earthly belongings and didn't have room for passengers. Sometimes, when I could walk no farther, my father would set me on the back of one of the mules pulling the wagon. At night when we made camp, we cooked over an open fire and slept on the ground under the wagon. “I guess that's why I never could get into camping. It's all coming back to me. Its hard to believe that that was fifty years ago. My how times have changed.”

All Sheffield could say in response was, “I can't even begin to imagine what you went through.”

That afternoon they arrived in Apache Junction at the base of Superstition Mountain, just twenty miles east of Mesa, Arizona and checked into a motel. Having lived there from the time that she was six until she was nine, she recognized the area, but was unsure of where her father's claim was located. After getting something to eat they looked around the town. It had obviously grown a lot since then and had become a bedroom community of Mesa and Phoenix in general. They happened upon the Apache Junction Mining Museum but it was closed for the day.

On Wednesday morning, Ramona had Sheffield take her back to the museum which contained a lot of old mining tools and other memorabilia from those long ago days. She happened to mention her connection to the area to the curator.

“I have the original claims records.” he said. “What was your father's name and about when would he have filed the claim?”

“Cyrus Erhart.” She told him. “We arrived here in the summer of oh nine.”

“Nineteen oh nine, you say. And Erhart. Give me just a minute.” After turning to the right spot, he continued, “Okay, here we have Nineteen oh nine. Now how do you spell Erhart?”

“E – r – h – a – r – t.”

He moved his finger down the page and stopped. “Here it is, Cyrus Erhart. It looks like the claim was

filed on September third, nineteen oh nine. It says that the claim was transferred to a Horace Jennings on June tenth, nineteen twelve. According to this, it say that Mister Jennings won it in a poker game.”

Ramona got very emotional, on the verge or tears and said, “Well then, Mister Jennings is liar as well as a murder. June tenth was the day after my father was gunned down. I was there and saw it happen. Then my mother and I were driven from the property at gunpoint.”

“Is that so.” the curator said. He was a little man probably in his early seventies. “I've lived around here all of my life. I used to do a little mining myself. I remember those day, things like that happened a lot.”

He then pulled out a map and asked, “Would you like me to show you where your father's claim was?”

“Can you? Yes, I'd like to know.”

It only took him a few seconds to plant his finger on the map. “Just go right up this road to Apache Trail, its also marked as State Highway Eighty Eight. Turn right and follow it out of town. You'll come to a turnoff marked as Service Road One to your right. Get on it and follow it clear to the end until you come to a trail head. The claim was about five hundred feet to the south right at the base of Superstition Mountain. The last time I was up three several years ago there was an old abandoned cabin. Its on public land so you're free to have look around.”

“Could you draw a map for me?” Sheffield asked.”

“Sure.” He tore a sheet of paper out of a tablet and began drawing a map. “You might not want to drive your nice car up there. Why don't you take my jeep.”

“Are you sure?”

“Heck yeah. I ain't goin nowhere. Here's the key. When you get back, I'll try to have some more information for you.”

“Thank you, Mister...”

“Baylor. My name's Baylor.”

Sheffield took the keys and the map and said, “Thanks Mister Baylor.”

“My pleasure. Oh and watch out for rattlers.”

“Thanks for the warning. I've got my Colt forty five in the car.”

Sheffield retrieved his old service pistol from under the seat of the car and and their water jug and climbed into the old Army surplus jeep and droved off. “This is just like Little Bertha.” Sheffield said. “Do you remember the jeep that I had in Hawaii?”

“I sure do.”

They followed the directions and everything was just as Mr. Baylor said it would be. The further they went, the more Ramona membered. At the trail head, there was a rough trail that lead to an old tumbled

down cabin with a caved in roof.

"This is it." Ramona said as she got out of the jeep. "This is where we lived." They walked over and she poked her head in through the doorway, while Sheffield peered in through an opening where a window had once been.

As they walked around the cabin, Ramona said, "The entrance to the mine was right over there." Sheffield followed her to the side of the hill that was over grown with brush. "Help me clear this stuff away." She asked as she began tugging.

"Just be careful of snakes."

With in moments they had revealed the boarded up entrance. "I'll bet no one has been in there in nearly fifty years." she said as she pulled off the boards.

"Are you really going in there?"

"Yeah, are you coming with me?"

"I saw a light in the jeep, let me go get it."

A couple of minutes later they ventured inside.

"Why are we doing this?" Sheffield asked warily.

"I'm not sure, but I feel like I need to to get closure on my Dad. You know, we never did get to claim his body and give him a popper burial."

"I didn't know that."

They went a little farther and Ramona said, I remember all of this. Shine your light over there. See that hole. Behind there was a small room where I used to play."

Sheffield shined the light inside so she could see inside.

"Thats odd. That pile of rocks shouldn't be there." Instinct drew her in. Sheffield followed.

"Do you know what this looks like to me?" Sheffield said in amazement.

"No. What?"

"It looks like a grave, just like in the westerns."

"You know what, Babe. You're right. Let me hold the light while you take off the rocks."

Sheffield started at one end and began removing the rocks. By the time he got down to the rock floor, he uncovered a skull.

Ramona shined the light on it. She gasped and held her hand to her mouth. "Thats him. Thats my father."

"How can you be sure?"

"Look at the front teeth. Do see how the one is broken off at an angle. Its just like his was."

"We'd better get back into town and get the authorities out here."

They Drove back into town and went back to the museum and told Mr. Baylor what they found. He called the Sheriff and in about twenty minutes, the Sheriff and the coroner came into the museum. After introductions, Ramona briefly explained the story of her father staking his claim and then being murdered for it three years later. An now she was sure that they had found his body after forty seven years.

The Sheriff and the coroner, accompanied Sheffield and Ramona back out to the mine. On the way, Ramona went into more detail of her father's story and what she had learned from Mr. Baylor that morning. Once they entered the mine, Ramona showed them the grave and the skull with chipped tooth. The three men went to work removing the rest of the rocks to reveal an intact skeleton.

"From the looks of it, I'd say it was a male, about thirty years old." the coroner observed. "How old was your father when he was killed?"

"Twenty nine."

As the sheriff poked around further, he uncovered a silver pocket watch on a chain.

"That was his." Ramona said. "If you open it you will find the name Cyrus Erhart engraved inside."

The Sheriff tried to open it but it was stuck. Using his pocket knife, it popped open. He looked inside and turned it around for Ramona to see. It said Cyrus V. Erhart – 1901.

"His father gave it to him when he turned eighteen. He taught me to tell time with this watch."

"I'd say we've solved a murder." the sheriff said as he handed her the watch. "We have remains, with a positive id and an eye witness to the crime."

The coroner added, "I'll have a team come out and remove the body and bring it into town for further examination."

The sheriff was still poking around and picked up a slug from under the chest cavity. "It looks like a thirty ought six to me." Then he asked, "How long do you folks plan on being in the area?"

Ramona answered his question with a question, "How long do you need us to be?"

"Lets see, today is Thursday, give us four or five days and we'll try to have things wrapped up to where you can be on your way."

On the way back into town they talked about what to do with the remains and other aspects to wrap up the case. When they got back to the museum, Mr. Baylor had uncovered some information on Horace Jensen, including an old photograph in a book that he had in the museum. It had been forty seven years but there was no mistake, he was the man that she saw kill her father. Mr. Baylor said that he had called the county clerk and asked them to go through their records and see if they could find him either in the death records or on the tax rolls or voter lists. They told him that they would see what they could find.

It had been a long day, one of mixed emotions for Ramona. On one hand, she had to relive the trauma that she experienced as a nine year old girl forty seven years ago. On the other hand she was

relieved that his remains had finally been found and would be properly laid to rest and that his killer had been identified.

On Friday more information was forth coming. Mr. Baylor's research and investigation revealed that Horace Jennings abandoned the claim six weeks later after he discovered that Ramona's father hadn't hit pay dirt as had been rumored. Not only did he murder a man over a worthless mine, but he got away with it. The search of the county's archives found that Horace Jennings was shot and killed in saloon in Apache Junction three months later by a jealous husband. He wasn't brought to justice by the law, but in the end he did get his just reward. As far as the sheriff was concerned, the case was closed.

The coroner had a chance to look over the remains and determined that Cyrus was shot in the heart at close range by a high caliber rifle. The evidence was way the ribs over the heart had been shattered by the bullet. Arrangements had been made for his remains to be buried in the Apache Junction Cemetery on Monday.

There was only one part of the mystery that remained unsolved. "Why wasn't the murder investigated at the time when Paloma reported it?" Perhaps that question would never be answered. Ramona suspected that no one took her mother serious because she was a halfbreed.

The rest of the weekend, they explored the Phoenix area and made a point to attend the Arizona Temple and on Sunday found a local ward in which to attend church. Then on Monday morning, they attended to the burial of the remains of Cyrus Valoy Erhart. It was a very informal affair with only Sheffield, Ramona, the sheriff and Mr. Baylor in attendance. Sheffield made a few brief remarks and dedicated the grave.

Their spontaneous trip to Arizona had proved to be far more than Ramona could of ever imagined when they left Harvey. With their business done, they got on the road again and headed north, on their way to see Janet.

That afternoon, they made it as far as the Grand Canyon. Ramona had never been there but Sheffield had been with Geannie on their Great Western Adventure of 1929. They spent the afternoon looking around and stayed in a motel that night.

They didn't make it as far on Tuesday as they thought they would, as there was so much to see. They headed north on US Highway 89, crossing the Colorado River on the Navajo Bridge at Marble Canyon. They spent the afternoon at Zion National Park and a good share of the next day at Bryce Canyon.

On Wednesday they made it as far as Manti. They had to stop in Manti and see what it was all about since it was the town that their friend, Manti Morley, was named after. Naturally, while there, they attended the Manti Temple. They finally reached Salt Lake on Thursday and spent the night and part of the next day with Debra and Chet Mayfield.

After twelve days on the road, they arrived at their ultimate destination and stayed with Janet and Jerry in Richmond. Their two bedroom home had an extra bedroom that Janet had fixed up for them. Jerry was out of school after completing his junior year at Utah State University and was working with Wayne at the ranch.

They all went out to Clarkston on the day they were shipping lambs off to market. It was a much bigger affair than their little round up at the Two Star ranch. Once the lambs were gone, the Jerry had time to spend with their company.

They spent some time resting and relaxing from the long trip. One day, they went up Logan Canyon for a picnic. Jerry showed them around the Utah State University campus, including a stop at the famous Aggie Ice Cream Shop. They attended the Logan Temple and on both Sundays they were there, they went out to Clarkston to attend church. During their stay, they could see that Janet was happy and that married life was treating her well. She had been wholly accepted by the Govers and was an integral part of their family.

Sheffield and Ramona hadn't considered where they would go from there. When they left Janet on Tuesday the 24th, they decided to go on up into Idaho and stop off in Rexburg before spending three days in Yellowstone Park. From there, they decided to go over to Mount Rushmore and then on to Council Bluffs, Iowa to see Dan and Daphne Kirk and spent a day with them. After Janet told them about seeing Winters Quarters, they had Dan and Daphne take them to see where it was.

At this point, they were anxious to get home and didn't take as much time exploring the areas they passed through. They took three more days to go home. After seeing Winters Quarters, they wanted to see Nauvoo since Janet had told them about it too. That day they went as far as Hannibal, Missouri, the home of Mark Twain. On the second to the last day, they cut across Illinois and while passing through Springfield, they stopped to have a look around after all of the times that they stopped there on their cross country flights. Of particular interest was Lincoln's Tomb in the Oak Ridge Cemetery and the Lincoln home. That day they went as far as Louisville, Kentucky. The last day, July 2nd, they came on home, only stopping for gas and food. In thirty two days, they put six thousand miles on Sheffield's new car and had traveled through eighteen states. It was still early afternoon, but it took a while to unpack and put everything away. The kids came over to hear all about their trip. That evening before going to bed, they had to have a relaxing soak in the boathouse before climbing into their very own bed.

With the itch for a road trip scratched, they settled down for an uneventful rest of the summer, which began with the 4th of July and ended with Labor Day. They got together with the kids and grandkids quite often, once for a couple of nights at the cabin. On the 21st of August, Ramona threw a Hawaiian luau in

celebration of Hawaii's formal admittance into the Union as the fiftieth state.

They returned to their classrooms on the Wednesday following Labor Day and the whole cycle began again. Wade went back to school at Roanoke College in Salem to become a veterinarian and Jerry began his senior year at Utah State. The main excitement during the fall was when they got a letter from Takara saying that she had her baby, who they named Christopher.

Then it was Thanksgiving, followed Sheffield's birthday and Christmas. In the blink of an eye, it was 1960. Janet wasn't able to come home for the holidays, but she stayed in touch with her long descriptive letters and an occasional telephone call.

As time marched on it was mostly the routine busyness of life; Sheffield with his government classes, the wrestling team, the ranch and his calling in the branch; Ramona with her health classes and managing her investment portfolio and buying and selling property. The only real events of note were not actually events, but the announcement of pending events. Janet and Jerry were expecting in the summer and Craig and Edith in the fall. Takara wrote with her own exciting news, she finally got her US citizenship.

As the school year drew to an close, Sheffield and Ramona began making plans to go to Utah to see Janet. It wouldn't be the full blown road trip as year before, they planned to fly out in the Staggerwing. This trip was timed in conjunction with Jerry's graduation from Utah State University.

School let out on the 25th of May which was followed by the annual Memorial Day Brason reunion and picnic.

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The growth of the church in Roanoke and the creation of the Bedford Branch are speculative.
The 1959 Buick Electra was as described.

The Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico on Route 66 opened in 1942 and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993.

