

Chapter XXXVII

A Quick Trip Home

September 1, 1965 – September 6, 1965

Since the time zones were working against them, Ramona had arranged for the earliest flight available. With everything arranged, early on Wednesday morning, September 1st, Roy drove them to the airport and dropped them off for their flight home.

They went to ticket counter and checked their luggage and proceeded to the gate that their flight was scheduled to leave from to await the boarding call. There were already several people there and more arriving. There were some who were obviously tourists returning to the mainland after a vacation in paradise. Others appeared to be business men traveling to the west coast. From their appearance, Sheffield and Ramona looked like they fell into that category. There were a few men in uniform, mostly enlisted men, who were most likely on their way home for a well deserved leave, although there were a few officers among them. Some of the other people were harder to judge as to the purpose of their travel.

There was quite a crowd of well over one hundred people gathered when the boarding call was made. Sheffield and Ramona picked up their carry on items and stood up and got in line. They handed their boarding passes to the ticket agent as they stepped through the gate and out onto the tarmac and proceeded to the waiting 707.

Once aboard the aircraft, they stashed their carry on bags and took their seats. They had barely got settled when the person who had the window seat came to claim his seat. Sheffield, who was on the isle, got up to let him in and he slid past Ramona to take his seat.

No sooner than he got seated, Ramona introduced themselves and struck up a conversation. His name was Martin Wheatman and he was flying home to the Los Angeles area after having been in Hawaii on business. Even before the plane had taken off she had found out all about his family. He and his wife had been married for seventeen years but were going through a rocky period in their marriage, but were staying together simply for their three children.

He must have found talking to complete strangers about his troubles therapeutic because he didn't hold much back. The source of their troubles was the fact that his wife had caught him cheating on her. She lost her trust in him although he begged for forgiveness and had stepped away from the one time encounter. More than anything, he wanted to hold his family together, but she couldn't move past it. She had been brought up religious and so he thought that she was being hypocritical for not being willing to forgive him.

“What about you, are you religious?”

“I want nothing to do with religion.” he said emphatically.

Ramona asked “Why's that?”

That was all it took for him to go on about how as a child he had been in and out of various foster

homes, one of which was a family of what he called “fanatical born again hypocrites.”

“So do you think all religions are that way?”

“Pretty much. Just about everyone I know who professes to be religious are hypocrites. They seem to say one thing and act just the opposite.”

“No one is perfect. Not even people who try to live religious lives. Everyone makes mistakes and has their own weaknesses.”

“How do you know so much about it? Are you ministers or something.”

“As a matter of fact we are.”

“You seem different. I sense that you are genuine and sincere.”

“Well, we try to be. Just like everyone else. Forgive me for saying,” Sheffield said, “but it seems to me that you are being a little hypocritical too. You want your wife to forgive you for something pretty serious, but you seem to be unwilling to forgive others for simply being human.”

That comment took Martin by surprise and he had to think about it for a moment. “I guess I never thought of it that way.”

“Are you familiar with the ten commandments?”

“My wife is always reminding me of number seven.” Then he added, “Yes, I am familiar with them. That's why I judge others the way I do. I've known folks who claim to be religious who don't give a second thought to taking advantage of others to get ahead. I can't say as I know anyone who has killed, but I see stealing, lying, and coveting all the time, particularly as an insurance adjuster.”

“Wouldn't it be nice if we all diligently lived the commandments.” Sheffield said.

“It would sure make my job easier.”

“I want you to read a sermon that someone once gave to a group of people who were acting just like the folks you've described. He asked some pretty searching questions that everyone needs to ask themselves.”

Sheffield reached into Ramona's bag and retrieved a copy of the Book of Mormon that they had brought just for such an opportunity. He opened it to Alma chapter five and handed him the book.

“What is this, a Bible of some sort?”

“You could say that. Before you discount it, just read this.”

Martin took it and read it. When he was done, he asked, “Is that what you teach people to do.”

For the rest of the flight, he listened intently as they taught him. He softened and began asking questions and was surprised that they could answer all of them for him. Eventually he opened the book and began reading from the beginning and didn't stop until the plane was ready to land. He closed it and handed it back to them.”

"Keep it." Ramona said. 'Its yours. If you'd like, we could have someone call on you in a few days to talk to you about it some more."

He kept the book and gave them his name and address in return. When they got off the plane, they shook hands and went there separate ways.

After a brief lay over, they were all settled into their flight to Washington D.C. and they struck up a conversation with the woman sitting next to them. It turned out that she was returning home from attending the funeral of her sister in California. When they told her that they were flying home to his brothers funeral, a conversation about death and what it held in store ensued. The second copy of the Book of Mormon, that Ramona had put in her bag just in case one wasn't enough, came out and they taught her from it concerning death and the resurrection. She offered to pay for it, but they insisted it was hers to keep. She too gave them her name and address. The two encounters had made the long trip seem to go quickly. They would probably never know what became of either. When they filled out the referral cards that Ramona also had in her bag, they gave a detailed description of each encounter and checked box requesting a response. Before they knew it they were on the short flight from Washington to Roanoke.

What was a long day seemed even longer than it was. When they landed in Roanoke, Sheffield's watch, which was still set on Honolulu time, read six fifteen but it was eleven fifteen in Roanoke. Craig was there to meet them, but he came alone because of the late hour. When they got home, they went in the house and got ready for bed and climbed into their very own bed.

The next morning, Ramona was anxious to indulge in one of pleasures of home that she missed the most, her bathhouse. She and Sheffield slipped out to have a shower and to enjoy a nice relaxing soak. It felt so good that Ramona wanted to linger a while longer.

Sheffield, on the other hand, got out and got dressed and went out to have a look around. Everything looked as if they hadn't left. Either Craig or Wade had mowed and raked the hay and it looked like it was ready to bale. He could see that Craig and Wade had taken good care of the place for them. Sheffield wandered around out in the yard. The cows grazed in the pasture oblivious to his presence but the horses came up to the fence to greet him as if they had just seen him. He gave Red and Admiral a pat on the face and said, "If I have time old boy, we'll go for a ride."

He then went out to the hangar to have a look at the Staggerwing. It too seemed to invite him to go for a ride. Sheffield heard himself say out loud, "If I have the time."

There wasn't a thing in the house to eat so they went across the bridge and just up the road to Craig's house for breakfast. The kids were all up and were excited to see Grandpa and Grandma come in their driveway and ran out to greet them. Grandpa and Grandma were just as excited, it had been nine months since they had seen them at Christmas. Gean was now twelve, Geoff ten, Todd seven, and Tina

was four going on five.

Craig only had a minute before he had to go to work and had already had his breakfast, but Edith got out two more bowls and said, "I've got Corn Flakes, Wheaties, and Cheerios. What will you have?" Craig had to leave, but they sat down to breakfast with Edith and the kids. They were all clamoring at once to tell Grandpa and Grandma about their summer and all of the fun things they had done. The highlight of their summer was when their dad flew the whole family out to Utah in the Staggerwing to see Aunt Janet, Uncle Jerry, and their cousins.

"Grandma, you sound different." Gean observed.

Ramona showed them the scar on her throat and explained how it had changed her voice.

After breakfast, they drove into Roanoke to see Emily. Anna and Ruth Ann were also there. Now that Anna was eighteen and had graduated from high school in the spring and had stayed home to work a summer job as she and a friend were going to BYU the next week. Paul, on the other hand, had gone to Texas for the summer and would be coming back the next day.

Ruth Ann looked much older than forty two. In fact, she looked older than Ramona who looked much younger than sixty two. It was obvious that she had lived a hard life.

Emily told Sheffield and Ramona about Shenan's final weeks and how he had suffered. She said that he talked about their trip to Hawaii often, that it was one of the highlights of his final months. The other highlight was finding Ruth Ann. While visiting with Emily, Walt and Sarah came over as well. They all sat around talking and sharing memories of Shenan.

After a while, Sheffield and Ramona left to go back home because Norma and the kids were coming over. On the way home, they stopped off at the store to get some groceries since there wasn't a thing to eat in the house, and they were going to be having a lot of company over the next two or three days. They got a lot of convenience foods that would be quick and easy to prepare.

Norma and the kids arrived a little later but Wade was at work, so they came without him. It was the first time that they had seen her since she had her miscarriage. As with each of her pregnancies, she gained a few more pounds that she wasn't able to shake off. The kids were excited to see them too. Teresa was now ten, Samantha was seven, and little Marty was four.

Ramona and Norma talked about what to do for a musical number at the funeral. They decided on the hymn, "Abide With Me; 'Tis Even Tide" but when she tried singing, she just wouldn't make it happen. She tried some warm up notes but still nothing.

"What am I going to do?" Ramona asked in frustration.

"Instead of singing it," Norma suggested, "why don't you turn it into musical reading?"

"It's worth a try." Ramona reasoned.

"Let's go through it once." Norma said as she began playing.

Ramona began reading the words as if she were reciting poetry, but she got out of sync with the accompaniment.

"Slow the tempo down just a bit, Norma, and let's take it from the top."

They started at the beginning and made it all the way through.

"That didn't sound so bad." Norma said with encouragement.

"What did you think, Babe?"

"It sounded alright to me." Sheffield agreed. "While you work on it, I'll go to the airport and pick up Janet and Jerry and the kids."

While he was gone, Ramona and Norma went through the hymn a few more times until they got the timing worked out. They were satisfied that this approach would work.

Sheffield returned with Janet and Jerry and the kids a little while later. It had only been since June that they had seen Janet, but it had been since Christmas that they had seen Jerry, Wesley, and Andrea. At four and two, they had grown since then. Soon after they arrived, Edith brought her kids over and all nine grandchildren were together.

Sheffield needed to think about what he was going to say so he kept his appointment with Admiral. Since he didn't want to be left behind with the women and children, Jerry decided to tag along on Blaze. Once they had saddled up, they crossed the river to the pasture on the other side and on out into the country side. In the fifteen months they had been away, the area had grown and what used to be open tracts of land were now under development. Unlike women, who seemed to always have to be talking, the two of them rode along lost in their own thoughts and each had very little to say. The ride gave him time to think and several ideas came to the surface as to what he could say.

Later in the afternoon when they returned, both Craig and Wade had gotten off work and had come over. Craig brought some hamburger that he got out that morning to thaw. They fired up the grill and had a cookout that evening. There was a lot to talk about and everyone wanted to hear of their latest adventures since they had last been together at Christmas. Speaking of Christmas, they began making plans for getting together for the holidays in another three months. They stayed up until well after dark. By then the kids were getting tired and both Craig and Wade had work the next day so they took their families and went home. Janet and Jerry and their kids stayed with Sheffield and Ramona.

Early the next morning, Sheffield and Ramona took advantage of the bathhouse before anyone else had come down stairs. When she came in, Janet and Jerry had come downstairs, dressed and ready for the day. Ramona and Janet began working on a batch of pancakes while Sheffield took Jerry out to the hanger to have him help him push the plane out and get it fueled. Sheffield wanted to take it up so he could think

some more about what he wanted to say. He always did his best thinking up in the air.

Jerry needed something to do for the day so he offered to bale the hay. After fueling the Staggerwing, they fueled the tractor and got it hitched up to the baler. By the time they went in the house, the kids were up and breakfast was ready, which included bacon and eggs. It was good to have fresh eggs again. The ones their hens laid were so much better than the ones at the supermarket.

After breakfast, Sheffield took off into the sky to be alone with his thoughts and Jerry went out to bale hay. Norma came over to go through their number some more, and while they rehearsed, Janet watched the kids.

From the air, Sheffield got a bird's eye view of how much the area had grown. There wasn't as much space between Roanoke and Salem as there had been. There was a lot more homes out in South County as he circled around to the south. His thoughts turned to his brother and what he might say about him. Walt had been asked to give the life sketch, so he would cover a lot of the aspects of his life. Sheffield's assignment on the other hand was to provide comfort, hope, and assurance to the family. His thoughts began to come together.

After three hours, he was satisfied that he pretty much has it figured out and began his decent. As he circled around the Two Star Ranch, he saw Harvey's Bobcat parked by the hanger. He also could see that Jerry was just about finished baling.

Harvey, Joseph, and Paul heard him fly by and were standing by the hanger as Sheffield taxied up and shut off his engine. They had come for Shenan's funeral and brought Paul home after his summer in Texas. Together the three of them helped Sheffield push the Staggerwing back into the hangar and secure it.

Joseph and Paul weren't aware that Ruth Ann had come. Joseph hadn't seen her since she left him and wasn't sure how he would react when he saw her. He was even less certain about how Rhonda would respond. The last thing he wanted was for a cat fight to break out at Shenan's Funeral. In the years since Ruth Ann had left, Joseph had retained a good relationship with his ex in laws and had a great deal of respect for Shenan.

After visiting a while, and getting Harvey and Marcella and Joseph and Rhonda settled, Sheffield loaned the keys to his Buick to Joseph to take Paul over to Emily's to get him settled in, to see Anna, and to pay his respects to Emily. Harvey and Marcella went with him, but Rhonda chose to stay behind. She wasn't ready to face her husband's ex-wife, whom she had never met.

Joseph found that there had been a lot of water go under the bridge since she left. Seeing her again wasn't as painful as he had anticipated. He found that instead of feeling anger toward her, he felt pity for her and for the hard life that she had chose over him and their children. The lack of hostility put Ruth Ann at

ease as well. None of the things they thought they might say to one another were ever said. Joseph didn't even ask her why she had left. It didn't matter anymore. He was happy, and obviously she wasn't.

When they returned, they all spent the rest of the afternoon visiting. Harvey and Marcella were doing well since joining the church and felt right at home in their branch. They expressed concern over their daughter, twenty year old Winnie, who had become what Harvey called a "wild child" and Marcella described as a "free spirit" since she went away to college.

Joseph and Rhonda had had the missionaries over off and on. Lately they had been seeing them again, mainly because Paul had been with them during the summer. It was a slow process for them and they had warmed up somewhat but it was their lifestyle that was holding them back.

With help from Janet, Romona pulled off an easy supper before going to the mortuary for the viewing. Sheffield and Ramona left before the others so they could get there ahead of those who came to call. They, Walt and Sarah, Emily, all five of Shenan and Emily's children and seventeen grandchildren, and Emily's immediate family had a private viewing.

Sheffield and Ramona were shocked at how much he had wasted away since they saw him back in February when he came to see them. He was not much more than a shadow of the robust man that he had always been.

At seven, people began showing up. Other than the Brasons, practically no one, other than Roger and Chantell Rowan and Stirling and Mary Ann Austin, knew that Sheffield and Ramona would be there. Some wondered if they might come, others were caught off guard to see them there. During the course of the evening, they got to visit with a lot family and friends, particularly Sheffield's nieces and nephews and their spouses and children.

Sheffield was able to talk to the Austin brothers. Edith had said that her Uncled Charlie wasn't doing very well lately. Sheffield could see that he didn't look well. After all, he was seventy eight years old. Winslow and Stirling, on the other hand, both appeared to be in good health. Winslow was nearly three years younger than Charlie and Stirling, Edith's father, was nearly three years older than Sheffield, just about the same age as Walt.

The morning of the funeral, Sheffield worked on his talk while Ramona and Norma rehearsed their musical number. Ramona still wasn't sure how it would go. Then it was time to go to the meetinghouse for the service. But first there was another viewing. Again Sheffield and Ramona got to visit with a lot of people who were surprised to see them. Most of them were members of the Roanoke Branch.

Then came the moment when the casket was closed one last time. The family prayer was offered by Shenan's oldest son, Danny. As the casket was taken to the chapel, Emily followed directly behind with her children and grandchildren. The rest of the family trailed after them. Those who had a part on the program

went up onto the stand as they entered the chapel. Sheffield and Ramona sat next to Walt and Norma on the other side of Ramona.

Once everyone was seated Hyrum Fielding, the branch president, began the service. After a hymn and the invocation, Walt gave the life sketch, which began with some pertinent information. "Shenandoah Brason was born August twenty fourth, eighteen ninety four in Roanoke, Virginia to Emmett and Ellen Sheffield Brason. He was the oldest of three children which included his younger brothers, Walter and Sheffield.

"He married the love of his life, Emily Ruth Bailey on March twelfth, nineteen seventeen in Roanoke. They were the parents of five children; Danny, Joe, Ruth Ann, Wendalynn, and Delbert, and have sixteen grandchildren.

Walt went on to say, "Shenan was a surveyor by profession, but more importantly, he was hard working and honest and taught those principles to his children. He was a quite man who preferred to remain in obscurity but nevertheless, he was respected and trusted by all who knew him."

He went on to cite some examples from Shenan's life to illustrate the kind of man that he was. He concluded by saying, "After battling with cancer, he was finally relieved of this mortal existence on August thirtieth, nineteen sixty five, just six days after his seventy first birthday. I'm going to miss you brother. We all will."

Following Walt, several of the grandchildren came up to sing a tribute to their grandfather. Then it was Sheffield's turn. His remarks were based on the conversation that he and Ramona had with Martin Wheatman on the flight from Honolulu to Los Angeles a few days earlier.

Using Alma chapters five and seven as his basis, he began, "Of all the people I've known, there hasn't been anyone more prepared to meet God than my brother Shenandoah. If anyone could, he heard the voice of the Lord, saying to him, 'Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth.' He could look up to God with a pure heart and clean hands, having the image of God engrave upon his countenances.

"So what was it about Shenan that made him this way? He had experienced a change of heart, kept himself blameless before God, being humble and stripped of pride and envy. He was a man full of patience and long-suffering, temperate in all things, and diligent in keeping the commandments, full of faith hope and charity."

Sheffield went on to cite examples for Shenan's life that demonstrated those qualities and attributes.

"Now some might ask," he continued, "what good did all of this do him?" Sheffield paraphrased from chapters eleven and forty of Alma, "Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, whether they be

good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life. As for the righteous, they are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow.'

"Now is the time for each of us to evaluate our own lives and what attributes and qualities make up our character and measure them against their rewards or consequences. Are we lacking? Do we need to work harder at becoming what we need to be? Are we willing to do what it takes? If so, the good news is that through the grace of Jesus Christ we can, but it is only after all we can do, which I might add, is not enough. Through the atonement, he has done what we are not able to do.

"So the question we must ask ourselves is this, are we doing all that we can? Or do we not want to bother to try to become better? Are we too comfortable where we are? Is it too hard? Is it too much to ask? Are we satisfied to settle for the consequences?

"What are the consequences? It is that the spirits of the wicked who have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord because they chose evil rather than good shall be cast into outer darkness where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. I don't even want to think about what it is like in such a place.

"So what do we know about this place called Paradise? Ramona and I have the privilege of living in a place called Paradise and I suppose that its as close as any place on earth to paradise. But I'm certain that it pales in comparison to the paradise that Shenan has gone to and awaits all who are righteous. So what can we expect there?

"He has been, as we all will be, reunited with loved ones who have already gone to paradise. According to President Joseph Fielding Smith, Shenan will now be among the faithful elders, and might I add sisters, of this dispensation, who have departed from mortal life, who continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin that they might repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God.

"Now keep in mind, this is not the final state of souls of men and women. For Christ has broke the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death. The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.

"Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be

arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

“This is the hope that Shenan clung to, that our mortal bodies shall be raised from death to immortal bodies, that can die no more that they can no more see corruption. No more to be ravaged by the affects of age and disease, such as the cancer that took his life.

“Not even this is the end, for one day we shall be judged according to our works, and every man and woman shall receive according to their own works, their own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared for them in the house of the Father and become joint heirs with Christ to all that the Father has, even worlds without end to dwell with them and our families forever.”

Sheffield went on to bear his testimony and closed his remarks.

Following Sheffield was Ramona's musical number. Norma moved over to the piano while Ramona walked to the pulpit. Her crackling voice no longer had the range and volume that it once had and she needed the microphone for it to carry.

Without any explanation, Norma played the introduction, then Ramona joined in, saying the words in pace with the music as one would recite poetry, putting feeling into it as she would if she were singing.

“Abide with me; 'tis eventide. The day is past and gone; The shadows of the evening fall; The night is coming on. Within my heart a welcome guest, Within my home abide.

“O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold, 'tis eventide. O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold, 'tis eventide.

“Abide with me; 'tis eventide. Thy walk today with me Has made my heart within me burn, As I communed with thee. Thy earnest words have filled my soul And kept me near thy side.

“O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold, 'tis eventide. O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold, 'tis eventide.

“Abide with me; 'tis eventide, And lone will be the night If I cannot commune with thee Nor find in thee my light. The darkness of the world, I fear, Would in my home abide.

“O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold, 'tis eventide. O Savior, stay this night with me; Behold, 'tis eventide.”

When she was finished, she hoped that the message of the hymn had been conveyed in the same manner as if was sung. She wasn't sure how it had been received, but she did feel the Spirit and from the looks of the congregation, they did too.

She returned to her seat and sat down beside Sheffield. He took her hand and gave it a squeeze. “That was beautiful Sweetheart.”

Then President Fielding got up and moved to the pulpit to make his concluding remarks. He took a

deep breath and turned around and looked directly at Ramona. "Thank you Sister Brason." he said. "I don't think I have ever heard a more powerful rendition of any hymn than what that was." Then he went on with his remarks, which were followed by a closing hymn and the benediction.

As Shenan's casket was taken out of the chapel, Sheffield, Ramona, Norma, and Walt came down off the stand and got in with the family. The pall bearers, who consisted of Shenan's three sons, one son in law, and two oldest grandsons, placed the casket in the back of the hearse. Once the door was shut, those going to the cemetery got into their cars for the funeral procession.

Once at the cemetery, everyone followed the casket to the open grave, not far from where Emmett and Ellen were buried. Just on the other side of them was where Geannie, Sandy, Austin, and Charles Emmett were laid to rest.

Once the casket was in place and everyone was gathered around, the President Fielding made some brief remarks and the grave was dedicated as his final resting place. With the services concluded, the family and close friends mingled together and visited for a while before making their way back to the meetinghouse. Several people approached Sheffield and Ramona to comment about their parts in the service. There were nothing but compliments for Ramona's reading of the hymn. To some, she explained why she had done it that way. Those who knew and loved her beautiful voice were saddened at the loss of her special gift.

Before leaving the cemetery, Sheffield and Ramona strolled over to Geannie's grave and lingered for a moment. With his remarks still fresh in his mind, he couldn't help but think about when he would be rejoining Geannie and the kids. The beauty of it was that he had the hope that somehow in the grand scheme of things, both of his families would become as one, something that he knew both Geannie and Ramona would welcome.

Back at the church, the Relief Society hosted a luncheon for the family and close friends. Ruth Ann seemed to be a lot more comfortable around the family. Joseph was kind enough to invite her to join them. She sat next to Anna at the far end, but was close enough to be introduced to Rhonda.

Through it all, Emily seemed to be holding up pretty well. She commented more than once that she would miss him, after all they had been married for forty eight years. But then she would add, "Its for the best. He was in such a bad way and he's better off." She had worn herself out the last several months caring for him. Now that he was at rest, she was relieved of the burden. It was almost as if she had worked through a lot of her grief while he was dying. Walt said that wasn't all that uncommon. Shenan had told her that he wanted her to get on with her life and enjoy as much living as she could while she was still in good health. After all, she was only only sixty eight.

The luncheon made it so Ramona didn't have to worry about feeding their house guests. If anyone

was hungry, there were enough leftovers to snack on. That evening, Joseph and Rhonda made the comment that something that Sheffield had said, made them realize that they didn't have satisfactory answers to the questions that he posed. They decided that when they got home to give the missionaries a call and give the lessons another try.

On Sunday morning, the Morrisons flew back to Texas. That left only Janet and her family staying with them. Sheffield and Ramona's entire family all attended church together in the Salem Branch. It was the first time Janet had been home in a very long time herself. It was good to see their old friends like the Rowans, the Furnesses, and others. Everyone wanted to know all about their mission so far. Since it was Fast and Testimony Meeting, both Sheffield and Ramona took a few minutes of the time.

Even though the Brasons had all been together on Saturday for Shenan's funeral, they assembled in the stand of trees down by the river at the Two Star Ranch for their annual Labor Day picnic. This year Craig had been in charge of putting it together. When he began making plans, he had no idea that Sheffield and Ramona would be home.

As usual there was was plenty of food and activities. Not only did they have Red, Roxy, Admiral, and Blaze saddled up, but Wade brought his two horses as well. Among other things, Ramona's bathhouse was open for business. This was a much more casual and light hearted affair than the gathering on Saturday. Emily didn't hesitate to join in.

Even more amazing was that Ruth Ann felt more comfortable around the family, especially her own children. She didn't try pretend to be something she wasn't to them. She had not been a part of their lives for so long, that it was impossible for her to try to pick up where she left off. She had decided to stay for a few more days before going back to California. She even hinted that sometime, she might consider moving back to Roanoke.

Sheffield and Ramona thoroughly enjoyed the day at home with their family and made the most of it. It was the last day of their quick trip home and the next day would be returning to their mission in paradise. After the rest of the extended family went home, the kids and grandkids stayed around spent the evening visiting, played games and made plans for getting together at Christmas. What food was left over was sent home with Craig and Norma and their families. The only food left in the house was for breakfast the next morning.

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